1. Rousseau

I A Swiss told the French that they did not know how to make love. What is even more astonishing, they believed him and took him as their master in the art of love. The Germans became the apprentices of the French, and in turn instructed the English. He, Rousseau that is, introduced them all to the *romantic* taste—ideal and sincere—to take the place of their *gallantry*, which he treated as a school of vanity. This marks the beginning of the frantic sexual search for genuine human contact and reciprocity in the isolation of bourgeois life that endures in one form or another up to our own day. Edmund Burke spotted it at its birth and recognized it as the sexual revolution accompanying the political revolution, the private life suitable to modern public life. Burke thought it was all degrading:

> The passion called love has so general and powerful an influence; it makes so much of the entertainment, and indeed so much of the occupation, of that part of life which decides the character forever, that the mode and the principles on which it engages the sympathy, and strikes the imagination, become of the utmost importance to the morals and manners of every society. Your rulers were well aware of this; and in their system of changing your manners to accommodate them to their politics, they found nothing so convenient as Rousseau. Through him they teach men to love after the fashion of philosophers; that is, they teach to men, to Frenchmen, a love without gallantry; a love without anything of that fine flower

> of youthfulness and gentility, which places it, if not among the virtues, among the ornaments of life. Instead of this passion, naturally allied to grace and manners, they infuse into their youth an unfashioned, indelicate, sour, gloomy, ferocious medley of pedantry and lewdness; of metaphysical speculations blended with the coarsest sensuality. Such is the general morality of the passions to be found in their famous philosopher, in his famous work of philosophic gallantry the *Nouvelle Eloise.*[1]

But his disapproval of Rousseau's romantic project was no more successful in preventing the spread of this enthusiastic infection than was his opposition to Rousseau's political project. Oceans of novels and poems—beginning with Rousseau's own *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and the *Paul and Virginia* of his disciple Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, and continuing with almost all the greats of the nineteenth century—flooded France, Germany, England, Russia and educated the tastes of peoples while at the same time watering the seeds of a psychology of sex. Burke failed, but he as clearly as anyone recognized the culprit and his power.

Burke captures the curious character of this sexual revolution when he calls it a medley of lewdness and pedantry. On the one hand there is a fervid and single-minded dedication to the beautiful, to love in its purest, most unqualified sense; and, on the other hand, a scientific concentration on the coarse material facts of sex—sex, not eros or love. The laboratory experiment and the passionate embrace do not go together nor are their devotees alike—the scientific man with his method of disenchantment versus the lover with his art of enchantment. This ill-assorted match between objectivity and commitment is at the core of modern love from the outset, apparently combining contrary charms that at the same time threaten its coherence. Great romantic longing and fullness of bodily satisfaction is the winning formula.

This odd combination, plus the public confession of an irregular and even perverse sexual life by the promoter of idealistic longings, provokes Burke's disgust.[2] And no philosopher told us so much about his sex life and its peculiarities as did Rousseau. As a matter of fact, only Montaigne told us a bit about himself, while Plato provided some tantalizing details about Socrates. Not even Rousseau's philosophic successors followed him in this. We are as starved for information about Kant and Hegel as we are about Bacon and Spinoza. They were either all ashamed or thought that private sexual tastes

were irrelevant to their thought. But artists of all kinds followed Rousseau's lead, appealing ever more to sexual interest while revealing themselves in explicit detail as part of their stories. Thomas Mann said that German schoolboys studied the loves of Goethe as Greek boys once studied the loves of Zeus.[3] Rousseau was the philosopher of the artists and the artist of the philosophers. Sex is connected with the love of the beautiful. But it should not be forgotten that the experience of erotic love links Rousseau with Socrates at the very origins of philosophy.

And it is quite a list of experiences Rousseau offers the world for examination: masturbation, exhibitionism, incest, sexually charged acts of punishing and being punished, now called sadomasochism, adultery, visits to prostitutes, experiments with *ménages à trois*, children produced and abandoned, and even homosexual assaults on himself[4]—all taken quite seriously as part of his quest for self-knowledge. Today this may appear tame, as writers continue to compete in the sincerity sweepstakes. But it remains quite respectable, and it comes from the man who invented the game, the man most likely to have thought through why it is a good thing to concentrate on such matters. The strangeness of Rousseau's procedure can be sensed by imagining how we would react to Newton's or Einstein's having left us detailed discussions of their sex lives. It just would not seem suitable and would at best be considered irrelevant to gravitation or relativity, their real studies and their real lives. Such confessions would have appeared to prove that their science by itself was not a fully satisfying way of life and that they could not merely as scientists be taken as exemplary human beings. Rousseau's life too is dedicated to knowing, and, in spite of Burke's strictures, and in spite of our common sense or received opinion, he succeeded in making his sex life a part of his life as a knower. Not only artists but philosophers, theologians, and statesmen accepted him, as he was, as a model of the man devoted to the most comprehensive knowledge.

Freud, more than a century later, took up the endeavor to found a natural science of psychology with sex in the starring role, making it the equivalent in psychological science of atoms in physical science, removing the stain of dirtiness or merely personal indulgence from those who pay attention to it. But Freud, unlike Rousseau, did not entrust us with anything significant about his own sexual tastes or practices. He adopted the pose of a Newton, the pure subject looking disinterestedly at the object, or, to put it conversely, objectivity analyzing the dearest illusions of subjectivity. I do not suggest that Freud was dishonest. He seems to have thought that one could

be a scientist of the soul in the manner of the great Enlightenment tradition of the science of bodies. This meant that within us all, or at least in those of us trained in scientific method, there is an anonymous observer capable of seeing things as they are, not distorted by our imagination, or our vanity, or our desire. All it takes is filtering out all those impurities or wiping the mirror clean.

Rousseau, on the contrary, seems to hold that our consciousness is thoroughly constituted by the impurities, chief among them sexual desire, and that knowing the knower is the hardest of all intellectual enterprises. One has to take what is going on in oneself—all of it—seriously in order to attain self-knowledge. Reason is only one of many things working simultaneously in us, and not the most powerful at that. The sexual arousal that occurs when one is supposed to be studying plant morphology contributes to the result as does the thought of the woman who may admire one's scientific brilliance. Love of truth does not appear to be man's primary motive, and, therefore, it is a long way to the truth from what one sees through the filter of the passions. Rousseau moves toward the primacy of the individual and unique human being over against the general and uniform natural law. He has no doubt that there is a human nature, but it is so far away from us—hard to reach and covered over with so much unnatural history—that as individuals we can hardly even attempt to live naturally. Rousseau allows us to witness his attempt to discover nature by living and meditating on his peculiar, acquired sentiments and experiences in order to find nature's tracks within. This cannot help but make most of us think about similar things in ourselves. We begin to take them more seriously, and we too wish to become sincere about ourselves instead of forgetting or lying.

The Rousseau of the *Confessions* is an unusually sensitive modern man with all the distortions that civilization produces in the life of the passions. This is the beginning point from which he proceeds in two directions, back to the sex of brutish man in the state of nature, and forward toward a possible ideal life of love that combines the unity of natural desire with the profundity and self-consciousness of civilized man, all of whose capacities have been developed. Rousseau's life, as opposed to his thought, requires him to compromise owing to the almost instinctual conflicts resulting from his mixed-up education. Erotically he does a bit of this and a bit of that in order to allow his desires to express themselves, always considering what will satisfy him while doing as little damage as possible to himself or others. There are sensual loves and sensitive ones, passionate loves and domestic ones, perfect and ideal loves existing only in fantasy,

licit and illicit loves, loves that give him a mother's rather than a mistress's care, almost meaningless sex and almost too meaningful love, loves tending to eternity and self-sufficiency competing, on the one hand, with the unsexual love of justice and the common good and, on the other, with the charms of natural solitude and self-awareness.[5] All of these alternatives are at least in part unsatisfactory, and none satisfies the longing for perfect love with reciprocity and permanence or the longing for lost wholeness that is the very core of the Romanticism he founded. Never does he say, "This is what I do, and that's all there is to it." He knows there are degrading lusts and acts, just as there are exalting and fruitful ones. He always keeps an eye on what sexual desire does to his whole soul and judges it accordingly. As Freud was the unsexy knower of sex, Rousseau was its sexy knower.

The present human condition, represented at its peak by Rousseau, is according to him so far from nature that it is no longer possible to live naturally. Not much of the complexity of the sexual life of civilized man can be attributed to nature—only raw individual desire and the reproduction required by the preservation of the species. The rest is due to acquired sociability and is likely to be chaotic and to set man at war with himself and others. The original sexual desire, which is to have sexual intercourse, has been transformed and become a murky stream in which many other kinds of desires now swim and pervade every aspect of life. Love, the desire to be loved in return, family and its duties and prohibitions, possessiveness and jealousy, shame and guilt, among many other things, are now set in motion by sexual desire. All the agony of the separation of the self from "the other" now follows from the innocent and in itself easily satisfiable arousal of the sexual organ. The very objects that move it are changed as imagination has come to dominate and dictate to the body's need. The achievement of a true personality, some sort of harmonious whole, is a work of art. Nature does not support or guide the artist in his work. Thus each such achievement, as the work of a serious artist, bearing as it does the stamp of his unique self, is bound to be different from every other. Man requires art, but few possess it. As natural men are all the same, civilized ones are all different. And most of them are a mess. Without Rousseau's art, another man with the same sexual tastes and history would be a monster. The lack of a natural standard for judging does not lead simply to relativism. The standard, however, is not a natural but an aesthetic one.

But only in nature or according to nature is man's happiness to be found, for it is there that a perfect equilibrium exists between his

desires and his capacity to satisfy them. The movement from nature to society destroys that equilibrium. New kinds of desires or modifications of old ones emerge, and imagination invents satisfactions or dreams of satisfactions that make desire infinite. Nature makes man whole, society divides him. The trouble with man comes from society, not from his nature. He is not suited for social life, and this is not his fault. His desires are, as it were, plugged into the wrong circuits. An older moral philosophy, which goes back to Aristotle, taught that desires are by nature infinite and that man possesses the faculty of will, guided by reason, which can control desires for the sake of the good. The language of this philosophy was that of virtue and vice. Virtue was in this older view understood to be natural and the control exercised by it to be productive of at least one part of happiness. Virtue is happiness according to Socrates' formula. Courage controls man's fear of pain; moderation his love of pleasure. This control of pleasure, a willed harmony in tension, was itself understood by this tradition to be a pleasure. The existence of such virtues and their pleasurable character—except perhaps for the vain pleasure of superiority over others—is flatly denied by Rousseau. In particular, it is the virtue of moderation, which governs the desires connected with food and sex, that concerns him so much. To Rousseau, man is naturally moderate.* Society enflames his desires, and the control exercised over them is not that of virtue but that of fear, of external command, of what we now call repression. The new language is that of health and disease. The wound inflicted by society produces sexual neurosis. Fear and vanity attach sexual desire to imaginary and distorted objects. Healing, rather than appeals to morality, is what is needed in order to attain the bit of happiness possible for social man.

II

Sexual desire, the source for him of so much misery as well as of the most sublime moments, played such a role in Rousseau's consciousness and in his observations of the men and women of his time that he could hardly help imagining an education that would take sex seriously and overcome the essential conflict

* This view is somehow maintained in Marx, where it is capitalism that creates artificial and limitless desire. Socialism will restore desire to its original condition. Capitalism, on the contrary, adopts the classical view that desire is infinite, although it shares the modern view about virtue. It rejects attempts to control desire and channels it instead.

between desire and duty. This would be an education for happiness (327, 419).* Sexual intercourse, he asserted baldly, is the greatest pleasure. A happy life must, therefore, have an important place for this pleasure. In their projects for the reform of man and politics, Rousseau's immediate predecessors and contemporaries had concentrated on avoidance of pain, on things men fear. Reduction of suffering was the negative goal of their thought. Economics, the dreary science, was the instrument of their reform. Rousseau went for the other half of the pleasure-pain dichotomy and concentrated on the positive. He was, of course, not such a fool as to think that a civilized life could be dedicated to sexual intercourse, but the civilized extensions of sex can be made the theme of a serious human being. Love, family, children, as well as poetry, can be made a way of life. An eroticizing of the world of concern to us is possible. The novel became the instrument of Rousseau's reform, and he hoped his educational novel, *Emile*, would someday cease to be imaginary, a novel, and turn into the history of man (416).

In *Emile* Rousseau takes the two evidently natural aspects of sex, individual pleasure and reproduction, and links them across a vast spectrum of sentiment and knowledge. For sex, he discovers, has an amazing or even miraculous power in man. Rousseau is some kind of materialist, but he finds in semen a capacity to turn flesh into spirit (232, 252). In comparison with hunger, the focus of his education of the child Emile (152), so much more can be done with sex. A refined palate and the vanity connected with the presentation of rare food and drinks splendidly served can take eating pretty far away from the fruits and nuts gathered from the trees and ground and eaten with dispatch by natural man. But for all the art and ceremony that can surround food in a country like France, it remains food. No one will die to preserve this luxury, and no great poet will celebrate it. Gluttony is not the worst of vices, but it is the most contemptible. It is a sign of small-mindedness. One can fantasize about a great dinner; but if that is the limit of one's fantasy life, it is a puny thing, morally and aesthetically handicapped. But sex, which is in fact no more naturally spiritual than eating, and, as Aristotle says, just another satisfaction of the sense of touch, the meanest of the senses,[6] is able to produce the most splendid flights of the soul as well as terrible tragedies. The energy emanating from the sexual fluids is at the root of world-transforming and adorning fantasies. Ideals of vir-

* All parenthetical citations in this chapter are to pages in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile: or On Education*, translator, Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

tue and sacrifice for others are part of its legacy, as told in the medieval romances. Natural man is flat-souled, even machinelike in his response to bodily stimuli. It is from the plasticity of sexual desire that his depth emerges. Moreover, unlike the other grand passions that, as Rousseau knows, develop in social man, especially religion and patriotism, this one has a natural base, a natural organ of satisfaction, and perhaps a natural end.

Rousseau believes this erotic component in man is both a force underestimated by his liberal predecessors, hence dynamite in the repressed bourgeois, and an opportunity for the harmonization and moralization of man. Locke, the greatest spokesman for liberalism, wrote an influential educational treatise that does not mention sex, offering instructions in how to rear the child in decent, even gentlemanly social habits, with a view to rational foresight concerning safety and security. He is to be a family man, but what that means is hardly discussed. At the end Locke simply leaves his pupil "to his mistress" (357).[7] Rousseau's pupil, on the other hand, does practically nothing but prepare for that moment. One might say that Locke trusts that nature will take care of the marital relationship if the two partners have otherwise decent characters, while Rousseau denies that there is any natural teleology pointing toward marriage and the family. Nature provides man only with an occasional desire for a casual contact with a woman. That is a long way from caring for and protecting a wife and children for a whole lifetime. Nothing natural makes a man *desire* that. Force and habit can achieve such a goal, but Locke, who intransigently returns to natural freedom as the basis for human relations, cannot found the family on traditional grounds. It would seem, from Rousseau's perspective, that Locke was politically radical while remaining largely conventional with respect to the family. Rousseau held, and put into practice, the belief that once nature has been invoked, all forms of human relationship have to be reconstructed in its light. The primacy in the liberal tradition of "the economic man," rational and industrious, controlling his desires not from virtue but from calculation of future benefit, will result in a neglect of the sexual force in man, with unforeseeable results. It will be there, but it will be treated as if it were not, or as if it were unimportant and easily dealt with. The striking innovation in Locke's book on education is a training in how to produce a perfect stool daily and thus gain mastery over disorderly nature,[8] while in Rousseau's book it is a training in how to have a perfect orgasm (not necessarily daily), thus assisting nature to a new level of satisfaction. As Locke never speaks of sex, Rousseau almost never speaks of the

toilet. Two different perspectives, and it is not difficult to predict which is likely to flatter men most.

Modern liberalism, unlike Greek philosophy and Christian theology, has no serious teaching about sex. Freudian psychoanalysis, a semi-Rousseauan enterprise, had to be invented in order to deal with the sexual neuroses of the bourgeois. The most authentic Rousseauan influence, however, is to be found in the great Romantic novels, which were meant not to help people adjust, but to found a life of sublime sexual expression.

An obscene and comic example can help to show how novel Rousseau's treatment of sex is and how much it distinguishes him from his predecessors, not only modern but also ancient. A story told by that great purveyor of gossip about philosophers, Diogenes Laertius, recounts that Diogenes the Cynic was found masturbating in the public square. When reproached for his shameful behavior, he explained, without trying to excuse himself, "I wish I could rub my stomach to satisfy its hunger."[9] This way of dealing with sexual desire is in accordance with the views of Cynicism, the school of philosophy that argued that men should live like dogs, that is, free of the tyranny of opinion and in accordance with nature. Make nothing more of sex and hunger than nature demands at minimum! This is an extreme case, but a similar attitude is present in much ancient philosophy, and Cynicism is a school that derives from Socrates. The last part of Book IV of Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*, a book important in Rousseau's own intellectual life, conveys something of the same message: Free yourselves from the illusory power of the desires; give nothing to them other than the vital minimum! Then you can go about your business—which in the case of this select few, philosophers, is presumably thinking.

This question of masturbation is also mentioned quite frequently in Rousseau, usually as a bad practice but one to which he himself is addicted. In his own case, however, it is treated not as a compulsion or a compensation for frustration but as an opportunity for idealizing imagination to produce more perfect partners than the real world supplies. This is almost an act of creativity, and Rousseau's use of the word "creation" is one of the first applications to human, as opposed to divine, making.[10] Rousseau does not get rid of desire but increases and heightens it. In sex, at least, as opposed to food, he is not a minimalist, and he shows how far his naturalism is from the ancient variety. In general, he moves away from the austere treatment of the passions and imagination in all previous philosophy, early modern as well as ancient. Aristotle, who says there are two peak pleasures, sex

and thinking, urges sexual moderation because one cannot think while engaged in sexual intercourse.[11] But one can fantasize, and Rousseau is not sure thinking is such a wonderful thing. Between feeling and sexual desire there is no such tension as that between thinking and sexual desire. Rousseau helps to render man whole again. A result of this way of uniting man is a preference for sincerity over truth. Romantic novels, music, and painting represent the new status of the passions. In Aristotle tragedy purges the passions, whereas after Rousseau the arts augment them and render them ecstatic.

III

Rousseau understood his romantic project as a response to a grim assessment of modernity, well known from his *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*. This condition can be summed up as individualism, not that virtue of rugged self-sufficiency so prized in American folklore, but a needy isolation in the midst of society. Rousseau foresaw the collapse of all the structures that tie men together. He originated the still fashionable analysis of human relations in terms of the opposition between self and other, with no bridge connecting them. Common humanity is only an abstraction that has no effects on individuals and produces no felt common good. Each knows others as a scientist knows natural bodies—not from within, but through a peephole in the Cartesian closed box of consciousness. The new philosophy and the new natural science had reduced men to atoms without natural connectedness. Everyone needs everyone else, but no one really cares for anyone. Hobbes said that all are naturally at war with all, and in spite of some disagreement with that formula, Rousseau accepts that civil society is founded on that premise. Civil society and the relations among men in it are only extensions of that war by peaceful means, substituting various kinds of competition and exploitation—mainly economic—for mortal combat. The primary relationship is constituted by contract, that is, between two individuals who remain individuals entering into a contract valid only as long as it contributes to the individual good of each. The links between them are artificial and calculated and, above all, tentative. In this condition, man's defense system is always on alert.

The psychological effects of this unending alert are devastating. A being concerned only with himself has to spend his time worrying about the intentions of others and trying to hide his own from them,

threatening, flattering, lying. In his selfishness, he forgets himself. His soul goes wandering out over the world of men and never returns, while he becomes hypocritical, envious, vain, slavish, measuring himself relative to the success or failure of others. This is the condition of alienation, which Sartre defined as "Hell is—other people."[12]

The selfishness of man is not for Rousseau merely a fact of modernity, the result of contemporary immorality or of false philosophy. It is always; it is human nature. What is new is that now everyone knows this fact, and modern politics, instead of trying to forget it, builds on it. This is the deadly truth. In the past, great legislators like Lycurgus and Moses denatured man in order to found communities (40).[13] The device they used was the transformation of individual selfishness into collective selfishness. Men lived within sublimating structures of family and nation, founded by force and fraud, decked out with myth and religion, to such an extent that their concern for family and country was barely distinguishable from their concern for themselves. Selfish deeds were punished by law and selfish thoughts by conscience. Now, full awareness of one's selfishness is not only permitted but encouraged as the foundation for voluntary association. Rousseau thought that this is a disaster, and much of his writing is devoted to describing and characterizing its product, the bourgeois.[14]

However, for all that, Rousseau, unlike Burke, does not suggest a return to the old way or even an attempt to prop up what still remains of it. And this is not only because he did not think it worthwhile to cry over spilt milk. Rather, in spite of its nobility, he thought that the old way was incomplete or imperfect. The very term he uses, "denaturing," points to the reasons. Nature is good. If social life requires its abandonment or its maiming, then it is social life that is questionable. Man, thus distorted, had shown great spiritual force in the ancient city or in the Christian faith. Would he be not only happier but greater if his social life were an expression rather than a denial of nature? The opportunity provided by the modern crisis is a complete, self-conscious rebuilding of man.

This is the project of *Emile*, which Rousseau begins by stressing that the opposition between natural man and social man, between desire and duty, is the core of the human problem, which is not soluble. The modern crisis results, precisely, from the false opinion that the two can be reconciled, an opinion that produces the bourgeois—neither natural man nor citizen, not knowing what he is, suffering from the identity crisis of all identity crises, a nothing. But a few lines later Rousseau tells us that his book is intended to unite

the two opposite poles, nature and society, to overcome, as it were, the principle of contradiction (40–41). This became the project of much of nineteenth-century philosophy, most notably in the great syntheses of Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche. The means chosen by Rousseau to this end is an education and transformation of sexual energy. From the outset this is a promising beginning, because sex is the only human need that naturally requires the participation of other human beings. But it is not as promising as it might appear because it treats those others as means to one's own satisfaction, not as ends in themselves. There is less harm done in treating a potato as a means than a man or a woman. The most likely outcome of using sex as the ground for relationship is reciprocal and tortured exploitation, desperate attempts to get others to give up their self-love without giving up one's own (213–214).

IV

Civilized sex, the kind having to do with what men call love, is in Rousseau's psychology a product of imagination and *amour-propre* (a term I shall not translate from the French). Imagination is the great and dangerous potential faculty dormant in the state of nature (213–214).[15] When it is aroused, man's separation from nature begins and becomes ever greater, for it suggests infinite fears and hopes, extending man's sensibility over the entire universe, transforming his needs by ideas of beauty and merit. In the limited area of hunger, Rousseau presents this change by the depiction of two dinners Emile eats, one with farmers, where he is served the simple natural food produced by the labors of those who consume them, and one splendid feast *à la française*, where he is awestruck by the richness of the silver, china, and crystal, the formality of the service, the rareness of the food and the elaborateness of its preparation, the grandeur of the company and the gallant relations between the men and the women. The second meal is heady stuff, but Emile is stopped dead in his tracks by a question put to him by Jean-Jacques: "Through how many hands would you estimate that all you see on this table has passed before getting here?" Emile realizes on reflection that the whole world and thousands of men and women have been forced to contribute to what he eats at noon and what "he is going to deposit in his toilet at night" (190–192). But for a Frenchman all this is a necessity (which he can perhaps overcome by an act of vanity that is even worse than this luxuriousness itself). Such factitious necessities

are the inevitable stuff of the life of civilized man. The imaginary or vain pleasures (and pains) cake over the natural ones so that they are no longer recognizable. His love is like this, but ever so much more so. In the state of nature any female suffices for man's desire, and she is always desired for the same old monotonous deed, but imagination makes civilized man choosy about his objects and gives him complicated ideas of what he wants to do with them.

Desire for exclusive possession and reciprocity are born of *amour-propre*, that mysterious keystone of Rousseau's understanding of the soul. The partners in a purely natural sex act could not care less what the other party thinks or feels, or has done before, or will do after. The relationship is hardly more significant than that between a man and his food. These sexual partners may be aware that they belong to the same species, but this does not mean much. Everything is related to the individual I, not to an unfelt thou or we. Rousseau, unlike older moralists, does not blame or struggle against this egotism. That is nature; to complain about man's selfishness would be like complaining about his not having been born with wings.

This exclusive self-concern Rousseau calls *amour de soi* (literally translated, self-love). It involves natural man in providing himself with food, an occasional woman, and a repose in which he enjoys sensing his own existence. He is absolute unto himself. Rousseau praises this selfishness, setting himself against the Christian moralists who take it to be the source of evil and oppose it with the command to "love thy neighbor as thyself." Rousseau suggests that the proper opposition is not between egoism and altruism, or something of the sort, but between good and bad self-love, *amour de soi* and *amour-propre* (92, 213–215, 243).[16] This distinction links Rousseau to Machiavelli and his followers who argued that men, instead of trying futilely to live in terms of imaginary oughts, should come to terms with and live according to what they really are. This is the first step toward an effective morality. And Rousseau's distinction determined the nineteenth and twentieth century way of treating egoism. It is understood no longer as a problem of man's sinful nature but as one of alienation from his true goodness.

To Rousseau, man is the only animal whose self-love can become altered or doubled in response to the recognition of others' existence. He can convert his simple search for exclusive well-being to a concern for being first among men. This means that his absolute being is turned into a relative one, dependent on the opinions and deeds of others. The small change from *amour de soi* to *amour-propre* constitutes *human* psychology. A dog will sometimes fight with another dog over

a bone, but it can never be concerned with what the other dog thinks of it. It may be discontented over the loss of the bone, but it cannot be insulted by the other dog, swear vengeance and spend its life trying to punish the other. But this is what civilized man does always, beginning from earliest childhood. The baby who learns that he can command his parents by tears forgets about his real needs and spends his time asserting his will over that of his parents. Food becomes less important than his relations of mastery and slavery. To love himself means others must love and serve him, and finally real need disappears in preoccupations of sacred honor. And this is the beginning of evil in man, which is the desire to harm and punish others (64–69). This transformation of self-love makes men aware of one another's intentions and hence, in this terrible way, the consciousness of the other's consciousness arises. Having relations to others means that existence has become relative to them and life is lived in terms of their opinions. Previously man thought only of himself. Now he thinks of himself through others and wants them to prefer him to themselves.

The movement to *amour-propre* from *amour de soi* came to be called alienation, that is, becoming involved with others and forgetting oneself. The precise mechanism of the misery of social man is to be found here. Vanity and pride are born along with their effects: competitiveness, ambition, anger, envy, jealousy, hypocrisy, deceitfulness, among others. A Rousseauan psychotherapy would treat the distortions of *amour-propre* in civilized man. Rousseau can sometimes sound like a biblical prophet when he denounces *amour-propre*. He does not however look to the virtues to overcome it but suggests various strategies for the recovery of the real self. He is *the* modern of the moderns.

But Rousseau, in spite of appearances, was not simply the enemy of *amour-propre*. It is, in his view, a two-edged sword. Mostly, as with all things human, it cuts in the wrong direction, but properly directed it can be the source of greatness of soul in the quest, for example, for political or literary or scientific glory, or for love. All these begin in the desire to be recognized by others as best.

Sex, of course, is where the expression of *amour-propre* is most inevitable. A man can be reared to be a Robinson Crusoe in society, independent of others in the provision of life's necessities, free of material or spiritual dependence on others. But as soon as a civilized man meets a woman, he has to care about her will, not out of respect for her, but out of respect for himself. Her opinion is more important than the sexual act itself. She must not simply give herself; she must wish to give herself.

Of course, it is most likely, once *amour-propre* is in play, that a

man will seek to conquer a woman's will without engaging himself in any way. Seduction, the attempt to get her testimony to his desirability, becomes the art of love. In its most subtle and artistic form ever, according to Rousseau, this art dominated the life of aristocratic France. Men without honor and women without modesty trifled elegantly with love. Neither really committed him- or herself, mocking the substance of love with its forms. The sexual act was adorned by imagination and vanity but was not informed by the morality of true love, in which sex is a testimony of permanent mutual esteem. The logic of this kind of relation was developed by Rousseau's disciple Choderlos de Laclos in *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, in which the whole pleasure of the two protagonists, the Vicomte de Valmont and the Marquise de Merteuil, is in sexual victory, a pleasure much enhanced by breaking the rules of conventional decency and taking advantage of innocence and, especially, virtue.[17] Deception rules and joy reaches its climax in the manipulation of the sexual desires of persons who believe they have moralized and tamed those desires, leaving them, in the end, with no self-respect. In this erotic war of all against all, the inevitable conclusion is that the two masters must, after having mastered the minor players, take each other on, with the results everyone knows. This exploitation and conflict is much more terrible than any connected with business, where relations are purely external and the individuals are explicitly self-interested. It is *almost* impossible, given human self-love, that the promise to care for another as for oneself be anything but deceitful.

But, to repeat, *amour-propre*, although it is already a perversion of his nature, is the only thing in man that unites souls. And education in love, connectedness, and even morality uses as its means sexual desire, imagination, and *amour-propre* judiciously formed into an artistic unity by the educator. This is a radically different kind of education from that proposed by Socrates, who asserts that he merely evokes what is already naturally in man.[18] Rousseau's education forms rather than evokes, and is a project and an act of creativity.

V

In the last stages of man's sojourn in the state of nature, before he was subjugated by or subjugated himself to civil society and its laws, when man was still free, Rousseau finds an equivalent to the biblical Fall. Men ceased their wandering and began settling down with companions. In such little communities

they began to make comparisons and to have preferences. No longer was just any man or woman good enough. Ideas of merit and beauty, the two components of love, led to exclusive taste for a single partner who possessed them and who, of course, was supposed to reciprocate. But when these wishes are frustrated, jealousy is born, bringing in its wake hatreds and desire for revenge. For the first time blood is spilled with the intention to do harm. But this is not all. These still essentially idle men and women, gathered in herds, devote themselves to singing and dancing, the companions of love. But some are better at them than others. Each wants to be attractive, to be looked at and preferred. Thus a certain kind of half-natural inequality establishes its throne among men, along with the pain and conflict such inequality produces. Happiness now depends on the opinions of others. Singing and dancing best, being most beautiful, most adroit, strongest, or most eloquent are essential to esteem, especially of the opposite sex. Those who possessed these gifts became vain and contemptuous; those who did not were ashamed and envious. Those thus deprived were tempted to feign possessing these goods and hence to become dissemblers and hypocrites, beginning the underground life of capricious torment in their dependence on others for their self-esteem. And all this for sex![19]

In spite of all these unhappy accidental consequences of the first cohabitations, Rousseau pronounces this to have been the happiest time, midway between the brutish sloth at the beginning and the perfervid activity of *amour-propre* we have at the end. Finally money, a merely conventional thing, will come to be the only distinguishing attribute, because it can buy all the others. Rousseau's analysis resembles Marx's, but for him the sex wars preceded the class wars and point to scarcities economics cannot remedy. Rousseau appears to have anticipated those twentieth-century intellectuals who tried to combine Marx and Freud.

VI

"It is now that man is truly born to life and now that nothing human is foreign to him" (212). This is Rousseau's description of what he calls "the crisis" of puberty. It is a second birth, moving man from individual self-preservation to concern with the species. The meaning and the secret of life enter into Emile's bloodstream at this moment, and Rousseau can apply to him the classic formula for the wise man. The key to humanity is sex. Until this

time the boy has learned his relations to dead physical being, the realm belonging to natural science. Now he must study man and his relations to his fellows. His understanding of humanity depends on the new condition of his body. Never has puberty been described in more portentous terms. This is the fatal moment, for good or for ill.

Rousseau is partly a naturalist and sees man as part of the animal kingdom. All animals appear to live in order to reproduce. Young animals become what they are at the moment when they can reproduce. There is an evident movement toward a peak. When they reach it, they are all that they are ever going to be. Then, in their fullness, their primary activity is the reproductive act, which they perform with pleasure while propagating their species. Nature would seem to have motivated their most necessary function with the most powerful pleasure, and the orgasm is the peak of their existence, when they are most fulfilled. When they cease to be able to perform the sexual act, they are on the downward slope toward death, useless, alive but no longer what they really are. Puppies are cute, old dogs can be touching, but everybody sees that these are the imperfections on either side of a perfection that defines the species. There is no prize at the Westminster Dog Show for the best puppy or the best old dog. And so it is with all the species. These are not scholastic ravings but the palpable evidence of our senses that the life sciences can perhaps not explain but with which they cannot dispense. We see it also in humans, although, since Rousseau, we have romanticized the innocence of children because he made us doubt whether there is a civilized maturity. Nobody except those who profit from the conventions of patriarchy, like Swift's Struldbruggs, would prefer the last part of life.

Man, though, stands out among all the animals as the only one who needs a sex education. Most other animals require some kind of education or apprenticeship to life, but it ends when they are able to reproduce. With man, the most serious part of education can only begin with the capacity to reproduce. Offspring is all that is required of the other animals, and they, particularly the males, have nothing else to do for that than engender. But human children, especially civilized ones, require extended and complicated care from both of their parents. Biologists say that man's sexual maturity comes earlier in his development than does that of other animals, which would seem to argue for some kind of inexplicable natural intention.[20] To interpret the problem that Rousseau addresses in a way suggested by Kant,[21] man has two puberties, one the physical capacity to make children, the other the moral and intellectual capacity to care for them. At least ten years separate the two puberties. A real culture

consists in their coincidence. This means that, unless one's sexual desire is for not only the act but the act with someone one admires and will always admire, one is bound to live in perpetual conflict between desire and duty. Desire naturally must rebel against the limits or laws imposed on it from outside. There is a war in the soul, constant guerrilla attacks, small victories by each side, compromises, spurious peace treaties, a struggle that exhausts the soul while the two combatants lose sight of their original goals. This is the condition of civilized man. A cultured person is one in whom the sexual desire has been transformed in such a way that it longs for the true, the good, and the beautiful as seen in a single permanent partner with the orgasm as the fulfillment and reward of such longing. This is a return to the original state when the performance of natural duty, reproduction, was rewarded with the greatest pleasure.

But now duty, no longer natural, includes producing future parents and citizens as well as human animals. The coincidence between the greatest pleasure and the performance of duty is henceforward most improbable. In civilized man pleasure is weakened and perverted by the bad conscience with which society saddles it, and noble duty is performed only for mercenary motives and halfheartedly. The one light Rousseau sees leading from real civilized man to the ideal of cultured man is the simple fact of love, a thing rare but not impossible, where the sweetest inclinations join the noblest aspirations and even sacrifices. In its usual form it is not enough, but encouraged and enlightened it points the way. The unity of man on a high level, his acquired faculties enhancing him rather than dividing him, would be the result. Society would be the instrument of realizing his sexual desire in the family rather than its oppressor. This is how Kant saw Rousseau's project, expressed, he said, in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Emile*: making man whole again after the tragic split in him between nature and society described in his celebrated early writings. Kant's was probably not an exhaustive interpretation, but it identified what turned out to be the most edifying strand of Rousseau's thought. The story of human community was concentrated in this precise and detailed description of the sexual drive for more than a century, with aftereffects enduring up to our own time.

Education from puberty on is sex education, just as education from birth to puberty is self-preservation education. And sex education does not consist in telling children who are not in a position to understand what mommy and daddy do, how to avoid pregnancies or venereal diseases, or how to recognize, ward off, and denounce vicious adults, particularly their closest relatives. All this is like lo-

botomizing them in order to avoid possible overaggressiveness, a kind of popular mechanics without thought about the uses of the machine. No child, Rousseau insists, can understand anything whatsoever about sex, because he has none of the experiences that make understanding possible. He must distort such useless information to fit what he can understand. A child can be a great expert on sweets or dogs. He cannot grasp politics, God (Rousseau will say later), or sex (255ff., 380–381). Who knows what crazy notions will come into the head of a kid who is told about such things. Sex education is properly education in the capacity to love and not in how to make love, an art not so difficult to learn as it is made out to be. A sublime utilitarianism that asks in the first place, "What's the use of it?" must precede the teaching of the sexual facts. As in so many other things, concentration on the means prior to consideration of the ends would turn the means into ends. Furthermore, this preparation cannot be a perfunctory statement prior to showing the pictures. The pupil must really understand and, more important, feel what he is looking for. If he does not love his ideal before practicing sex, he will never love it. The separation of sex from love is fatal to love. It must seem impossible to practice the former without experiencing the latter, for sexual energy is necessary to real love. Therefore sex education essentially deals with the development of the imagination.

The miracle of sex, according to Rousseau, is that although it is purely material, it becomes in civilized man utterly dependent on imagination, which is purely immaterial. Imagination most palpably moves the flesh. Most men and women physically reject persons who could quite easily satisfy their physical desire because such persons do not fit their imaginary model of beauty or merit. The body just won't perform. No civilized sex is simply physical. It is always mixed up with some image of what the other party is or what one is oneself in relation to that other party. None of this is natural. Rousseau's project is to form the imagination in such a way that men's preferences will tend toward serious objects, the enjoyment of which might result in happiness and a life in conformity with decent social relations. This means that sex education can be undertaken only by a philosopher, someone who has reflected on man's nature and his place in the order of things. It is not an affair for sexual plumbers.

How to perform this delicate operation of uniting desire and sublime imagination is demonstrated in Books IV and V of Rousseau's *Emile*. Perfect sexual satisfaction is the end of this education, and sexual desire is its means. Illustrative of Rousseau's point is an anecdote John Aubrey, the author of *Brief Lives*, recounted to a friend

who had expressed the opinion that "the only time of Learning is from nine to sixteen, afterwards Cupid beginns to Tyrannize." Aubrey responded that "Mr. Hobbes told me, that G. Duke of Buckingham had at Paris when he was about twenty years old, desired Him to reade Geometrie to him: his Grace had great naturall parts and quicknese of witt; Mr. Hobbes read, and his Grace did not apprehend, which Mr. Hobbes wondered at: at last, Mr. Hobbes observed that his Grace was at mastrupation (his hand in his Codpiece). This is a very improper age; for that reason for learning."[22] The young man was experiencing what Socrates' companion Glaucon called erotic necessity, altogether different and more intense than geometric necessity. The simple fact is that all young people, especially boys, as soon as they start feeling these new things in themselves, even more so if they have some idea what they mean, are incessantly preoccupied by them. Anybody who has dealt with them at that age knows their obsession. If you say, "It's a nice day," they see some hidden sexual reference and laugh. I remember a science teacher when I was in high school demonstrating something with a tube out of which a white substance emerged sporadically. The continuous giggling of the class drove him wild until he yelled, "Only perverts could see something funny in this." He was greeted by sustained uncontrollable laughter. All our wit and intellectual energy were otherwise engaged, and the teacher simply made perversion seem interesting while adding the fillip of the forbidden to our glee. At a certain age adolescents start having new interests that conventional studies do not address. Their lives become split between what they are learning in school and what really concerns them. There is an immense literature about the double lives of adolescents.

They have got to learn, say the pedants. Rousseau says the study of mathematics and physics is unerotic, as are the specialties and the arts of self-preservation. That is why Rousseau has made such an effort to give Emile a basic knowledge of nature and the skills of natural science prior to puberty. He must have submitted himself to the iron laws of natural necessity before his imagination comes into play and fills up the world with its tales. Otherwise he will bend nature to his whims as do the savages with their myths. Natural science can be taught in such a way as to appeal to the primary concerns of children—self-preservation and being able to get around on their own. But natural science cannot be taught to appeal to adolescents with their special concerns. What a shame it is, Rousseau laments, to waste that pure source of curiosity and energy, which could be used for humanizing studies, just because adults want them

to learn something else. The trick is to find things for an adolescent to learn that attract his new sensibility and at the same time instruct it. Now is the moment when the old saw "The proper study of man is man" becomes true and when consciousness finally begins to be self-consciousness. Otherwise youngsters will have dead studies and untutored experiences. And deceptions of all kinds become the order of the day. The hidden life becomes the real one.

Rousseau was a shrewd observer of human motivations and made neat calculations of how they operate on the various ages of man. A five-year-old will promise to jump off a tower tomorrow if you give him a cake today, because he does not know what tomorrow is and does not know what a promise is. You can come to collect on his promise, and he will refuse without understanding what is bad about it. You can spank him, which gives him a real motive to keep his promises. But this does not mean that he recognizes that breaking promises is bad, only that he knows that being spanked is bad. The cause of the spanking is not in the nature of the deed but in you. The way out is simple: the child will do what he pleases while hiding it from his parents. There is no escaping this, Rousseau argues, so better not exact promises from children. A twelve-year-old knows what tomorrow is and can calculate that it is probably wise to sacrifice today's pleasure to avoid a greater pain tomorrow. Honesty is the best policy, he understands, but the evil of lying is still beyond him. Rousseau accuses Locke of not being able to get beyond this stage in his education, which, as earlier noted, does not include sex. The twenty-five-year-old Emile can promise fidelity to his Sophie, not because of the pleasure he is going to get or the pain he is going to avoid, but because of his respect for her and his respect for himself. His pleasures and pains have become drastically changed by his attachment to the ideal.

The postulate of Rousseau's reasoning about this subject is that man is by nature an idle beast willing to make no more effort than is absolutely necessary to get his food and shelter in order to be able to lie around dreamily. There is no inborn desire for self-improvement. Therefore, it is very difficult to get man to learn anything other than what the most immediate pleasures and pains would urge. Education must consist in finding motivations for what it is good for man to know. Rousseau indicates that up to his day educators had found only three motives, all of which have bad side effects and can even destroy the value of learning. They are fear, gain, and vanity (89–90). These turn out to be motives that dominate bourgeois life in general, prepared for by bourgeois education. Translated into childish terms they are presented in the form of spanking and scolding, gifts and other

such payments, and honor and praise. The trouble with all of these is that learning is never for its own sake and that it encourages certain spiritual deformities. Fear produces anxious human beings, concerned with avoiding pain but incapable of experiencing the sweetness of existence. Slavishness and toadying to authority along with learning understood only as a way of avoiding pain or death are the results. Hobbes's man. Base gain reduces learning to its market price, and its possessor understands only the mercenary. The child thinks that his studies have their *raison d'être* in the rewards. Locke's man! The worst of all is vanity. Omnivorous *amour-propre* is set in motion from the earliest age, feeding on the highest things only for the sake of the subject's sense of superiority over others. Vanity is a profound source of inequality among men, and its effects are described harshly in the second part of the *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*. This is a critique of the Enlightenment, but also a critique of the pride of the theoretical life altogether. Socrates' man? Young Emile is treated harshly only once by his teacher, Jean-Jacques. That is when he learns about magnetism and uses his knowledge to gain the applause of ignorant people. Jean-Jacques arranges to have him humiliated publicly by a greater expert on magnetism and the manipulation of crowds. He does so because vanity is the most powerful distorter of souls (172–175). A child will soon forget the artificial lesson in history or the theorem of geometry you teach him in this way, but the effects of the methods used to teach him last forever and determine his disposition toward life as a war against others for the sake of security, profit, and esteem.

In response to this problem Rousseau finds two alternative motives for learning that do not corrupt his pupil's natural goodness. The first is food and especially sweets. All children are gluttons, particularly when it comes to sweetmeats. This is beyond the brutish desire for any nourishing food, though it does not go very far from nature. A child will make an effort beyond that required to stay alive to get sweets. The charm in the first three parts of *Emile* is Rousseau's subtle use of food as the means of instruction. Emile learns to read because he receives invitations to go and eat custard at some neighbor's place but does not know where and when. He perfects astronomy when he is lost in the woods at lunchtime and tries to orient himself in order to get home and eat. Rousseau rings every change on this theme, and it is the means of almost the entire early education. He argues that the food, if properly distributed, appears to the child to be connected to the thing he is asked to learn and does not cause him to look away from it to the will or the whim of the adult who teaches him. Rousseau gives the example of an Italian boy who

learned the whole of Archimedes' geometry from cakes made in the various geometric shapes. Since he was allowed to eat only one a day, it was very much in the little glutton's interest to figure out which one had the greatest volume. The final advantage of this method is that the desire for sweets, unlike fear and vanity, will become unimportant when the child reaches puberty. He will have other kinds of sweets on his mind. No young man in love is at risk of corruption from gluttony. The result of the use of sweets in teaching is the opposite of that of the other methods: the learning remains, while the superadded motive disappears. This procedure, in its use of sugar, imitates the sweetness of being (117, 180–181, 146).

The second motive invented by Rousseau is of course sex, sexual desire, sexual energy, or however one ought to describe the effects of the fluids that enter Emile's body at puberty. The last two thirds of the book are only a detailed account of Emile's sexual development. This is the golden thread, so often missed by interpreters, uniting the diverse matters treated that make the book appear to be an ill-organized and ill-assorted compendium. Rousseau says, concerning food, that he can lead armies of children to the ends of the earth by the mouth (153). He implies that he can do the same with adolescents using the instrument to which the promised satisfaction is addressed. The genius of *Emile* consists in Rousseau's exclusive use of these two simple motives from beginning to end to accomplish the whole complex work of culture.

But there is this difference: the sweets are covertly added by Rousseau to provide a motive for the child that is not naturally in him; the sexual yearning is in the adolescent, and the task is to mislead him about its true object. The child Emile runs for sweets; the adolescent seeks God and other ideals because he does not yet know what he really longs for. The task is to enrich his desires before they are satisfied. It is not to forbid his satisfaction, which would be to repress him and divide him against himself. The goal is to sublimate his desires prior to his capacity to distinguish sex from love, so that when he learns about the distinction it no longer interests him.

We find ourselves here, as it were, at the source of the Nile, the almost unnoticed origin of a great stream that overflowed its banks and produced a tropical proliferation of exotic plants. Although he never used the term, Rousseau is the founder of sublimation in the precise sense of the word. Kant understood Rousseau to be a teacher of the sublime, and from then on the movement from the material to the spiritual, a movement not natural but cultural, was called sublimation. Popularly this is thought to be an invention of Freud, but

here we have it in an inspiring rather than a grim form, with a clear and persuasive answer to the critical question "What is sublime?", a question hardly addressed by Freud.

Rousseau's intention is to create longing in the soul of man. Natural man does not long. He has desires that lead to immediate satisfactions. And bourgeois society, in a perverse imitation of nature, provides small goals and small satisfactions for its typical man. Romanticism, Rousseau's child, tried to encourage, within the confines of bourgeois society, a small band, the happy few, men of genius, the artist-lovers with the greatest longing for the greatest goals. Rousseau tries to construct eros. Eros is a word I try not to use in relation to modern writers, for none of them can consistently assert that the longing for the ideal is what sexual desire is really all about. They have to fabricate eros with "the stuff dreams are made on." Merely imaginary or illusory ideal objects made by poets are supposed to solicit the desires of men. Can such insubstantial images really persuade men for long against the force of real bodily desire?

This is the question that makes one doubt the whole Romantic project and makes one wonder whether today's dreary scene of boring and meaningless sex is not its consequence. For Rousseau and his followers were trying to make something out of nothing, to draw men out of the primal slough with a rope that cannot be attached to anything above, other than a hope and an aspiration. Goethe expresses this romantic faith in the formula "The Eternal-Feminine attracts us higher." Nietzsche scoffed at this.[23] Freud and Kinsey are waiting at the end of the garden path.

VII

Rousseau begins his education with the observation that the passions, particularly the sexual passion, are naturally good and that God would never condemn or wish to annihilate them (212–213). This apparently casual remark goes to the heart of his intention. It is an attack on the notion of original sin and the whole Christian revelation. This was, of course, a hot topic, Rousseau's treatment of which resulted in his exile from Catholic France and Protestant Geneva. The dividedness of man in this most intimate area of his life is caused by the universal acceptance of the Fall as the cause of his misery—his vices and perversions. The essence of Rousseau's project is to heal the guilt poisoning modern men, to lift them up again to complete and unhampered love. To use

the jargon favored by Denis de Rougemont, Rousseau works for the final triumph of eros over *agapē*. The very commandments concerning man's sinfulness make him into both a rebel and a slave and ruin his sexual experience. God corrupted man. Rousseau underlines this by his silence about the Bible, God, and religion throughout Emile's childhood. Rousseau even writes, "I hate books," just prior to giving Emile the only book he reads until his teens, *Robinson Crusoe*, about a man who survives alone on an island by his own resource and without any higher authority (184). Rousseau does not point it out, but we can observe that Emile is not baptized or taught the catechism, so as to preserve him from theological contamination with its stimulation of the terrified imagination.

There is nothing particularly novel about the project of unifying man, of suppressing the difference between how he ought to live and how he does live, reducing the tension between body and soul, and doing away with the conflicting demands of the heavenly and the earthly city. From Machiavelli on, this was the goal of the Enlightenment writers. We still see the remains of their work in such institutions as the separation of church and state. But none of them concentrated on the sexual damage done by the Christian teaching. There were a lot of obscene jokes about priests and nuns, and sexual libertinism was used as a sign of rebellion from the divine law, but the discovery and reconstruction of the pre-Christian disposition toward sex or an improvement on it does not seem to have interested any of the Enlightenment thinkers—as opposed to some of the very early moderns like Boccaccio, Chaucer, Montaigne, and Shakespeare—because they thought either that it was unimportant or that it would rectify itself. Nietzsche said, "Christianity gave Eros poison to drink. He did not die, but became vice."[24] Rousseau made the undoing of that mistake central to his writing. He did so for all the reasons that I have already discussed. He moved from concentration on individual rights concerned with property and security to concentration on what is now called the private life. We are aware that when people talk about privacy these days, they mean sex and what is connected with it. Rousseau is the modern philosopher who most loved Plato's *Symposium* and gave the nineteenth century a taste for it. Rousseau originates Blake's notion of "the botched creation" and the attempt to begin over again with a new Adam, which means without the Fall. This theological background, likely to go unnoticed today, is necessary to understand what Rousseau is about. As he was, along with his great predecessors, the enemy of Christianity in politics,[25] so he was also its enemy in the realm of love.

This does not mean that Rousseau is for "letting go." Man is now an artificial being, full of factitious desires and passions, afflicted by the sinful view of sex propagated by Christianity and the materialism of modern philosophy. Breaking through ancestral restraints now would put into practice all the contradictions nourished within men over millennia and debase their human contacts all the more. So far are we from nature that we must begin over again in the new Eden Rousseau depicts in his education. The biblical tradition knew some things about sex that have to be incorporated into a natural education, and they concern its danger and its sacred character. When God made the covenant with Abraham, promising that his offspring would become a great people, countless as the sands of the desert or the stars in the sky, it was in return for the circumcision, meaning that God was to take charge of the organ of generation, which He would then loan to man. This great loan from God was not a thing to be played with. Fathers then still had vast views of the meaning of their acts of generation. They were not to waste their precious seed on the ground or in any other way. The future depended on it. In such a light, talk about the "right" to control one's own body, especially all the parts that have to do with reproduction, sounds pretty silly. The sexual organs in their movements are the visible presence of the sacred. Rousseau wishes to maintain this kind of divine possession without the authority of God and all the nays of the biblical commandments. So extreme is his intention.

As I have said, the beginning point of all this is puberty. And Rousseau's view is that early puberty is a curse. It means that there is that much more time for an immature person to get corrupted and that much less learning before having to cope with the crisis of puberty. The asexual things that have to be learned get mixed up with the sexual ones, which means that unerotic necessity will have less sway over his judgment while imagination will tend to feed on everything without limit. The distance between natural and civil puberty is greater, and it is more difficult for Rousseau to reduce that distance to nothing. His two techniques for filling the gap before explicit sexual knowledge is made available to the young man are (1) delaying puberty and (2) keeping him ignorant of the meaning of his feelings.

To many contemporary readers, Rousseau, after liberating sexual desire from the yoke of sin, seems to impose a similarly severe but merely human yoke. He is charged with vestigial Calvinism (his Genevan religion) or, more loosely, with puritanism. But one must remember that the restraints he imposes derive their authority from nothing other than supreme sexual pleasure. It is precisely to give

man freedom from brute desire and to avoid the imposition of necessary social restraints from outside that Rousseau is the proponent of love. Man is naturally attracted to any available object. But when he is really in love, all females lose their attractive power except for the beloved one. There is no adultery or infidelity in the heart of a lover. Love is immeasurably more effective than religious stricture in civilizing sexual desire. This is the very model of Rousseau's promotion of moral ends without morality. Morality would be only a less effective substitute for love. This goes with, not against, the grain. No nays; only yeses (327ff.).

These are the kinds of things that elicit the apparently cranky sides of Rousseau's thought. If one does not see the crucial importance of attaching idealism to sexual desire from the outset, making the two separate things into a seamless unity, all of Rousseau's remarks concerning late puberty, particularly the view that the psychological surroundings have much to do with the age of puberty, as well as his strictures against loose language and masturbation, seem silly.

Rousseau is aware that in primitive societies a thirteen-year-old can be considered a man because the duties and learning of man's estate are very simple, but the complexities of civilized society make it impossible for any young person to put together the demands of immediate raw nature and those of civilization. If one does not attempt what Rousseau attempts, the opposition between desire and morality will divide men. He presents us both a hope and a great doubt. The hydraulics of the soul are such that if you use its energy in one direction, it will not have any available for the other. Even early knowledge of the facts so fixes the imagination that it is impossible to turn it to other objects.

VIII

Rousseau states with exceptional force the whole principle of his education, which leads from brutish nature to high civilization or culture, at this decisive moment:

> Do you wish to put order and regularity in the nascent passions? Extend the period during which they develop in order that they have the time to be arranged as they are born. Then it is not man who orders them; it is nature itself. Your care is only to let it arrange its work. If your pupil were alone, you would have nothing to do. But everything surrounding

him influences his imagination. The torrent of prejudices carries him away. To restrain him, he must be pushed in the opposite direction. Sentiment must enchain imagination, and reason silence the opinion of men. The source of all the passions is sensibility; imagination determines their bent. Every being who has a sense of his relations ought to be affected when these relations are altered, and he imagines, or believes he imagines, others more suitable to his nature. It is the errors of imagination which transform into vices the passions of all limited beings—even those of angels, if they have any, for they would have to know the nature of all beings in order to know what relations best suit their nature.

This is, then, the summary of the whole of human wisdom in the use of the passions: (1) To have a sense of the true relations of man, with respect to the species as well as the individual. (2) To order all the affections of the soul according to these relations.

But is man the master of ordering his affections according to this or that relation? Without a doubt, if he is master of directing his imagination toward this or that object or of giving it this or that habit. Besides, the issue here is less what a man can do for himself than what we can do for our pupil by the choice of circumstances in which we put him. To set forth the proper means for keeping him in the order of nature is to say enough about how he can depart from it. (219)

This provides an outline for the rest of his education. The young boy prior to puberty had a sound relationship to things based on natural experience and a science that explains their regularity. Now the problem of his relation to men becomes the great question, and this is ever so much more difficult because men, unlike things, do not behave with regularity and permanence, but are capricious. Imagination is the wild card, and Rousseau's intrusive education depends upon giving the imagination guidance about what things are and what is desirable in them in such a way that it can correspond to the demands of unity and autonomy. Unlike older views that imagination, though deceptive, reflects or hints at natural reality, Rousseau teaches that imagination must compensate for what nature does not provide for human existence. Therefore it is up to man himself to establish a rank order of goals from his own freedom or spontaneity. Here Rousseau makes it clear that only a philosopher can do this. The philosophic teacher exists to get the ball rolling, and

enable man's imagination to become independent. This teacher begins by showing how sentiment can enchain imagination with the first step of his sexual education, which is compassion.

Rousseau tells us that human relations properly begin only when man's sensibility or capacity for feeling extends beyond himself. What he means by sensibility here is that capacity for feeling new sensations, beyond the self-preservative ones, that arise with sexual maturity. Rousseau radicalizes the modern view that man is essentially a being of feeling rather than a rational animal. Hobbes argues that man is a being of feeling or passion, but in the end makes man's connection to others a result of calculating reason. Rousseau insists that unless there is a relationship of feeling among men, the opposition between self and others will make it impossible for them to have a moral connection with one another. The youngster whose imagination is occupied with the pursuit of sexual pleasure will have an entirely different perspective on things from the innocent one who, full of feelings whose meaning he does not know, will investigate his new relatedness to other persons.

Another way of putting the same thing is that Rousseau agrees with modern thought, as over against ancient thought, that reality resides in the unique, individual beings. The universal is abstract. Therefore, humanity is an abstraction unless there is a bridge built by the unique individual to it by feeling. This is the work of compassion, and its emergence is the first stage in overcoming the natural opposition between self and others.

Rousseau had argued in his earliest writings, in particular *The Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality*, that there is present in both brutes and man a feeling of connection with the sufferings of others of their kind.[26] In *Emile* he develops that view but transforms it by making compassion both more central to the soul and more active in guiding the actions and sentiments of his pupil. It is immediately clear why Rousseau prefers feeling to reason in this context. Natural pity makes us immediately sympathize with the sufferings of others, but reason can assure us that it is the other who suffers and that we are not necessarily in the same boat with him. Excessive rationalism individuates man and strengthens natural selfishness. Therefore liberalism's attempt to use reason as the ground for the social contract goes in the wrong direction. The only connection is in the passionate sense of bodily and spiritual suffering. Human beings can be understood to share a common fate on the basis of their vulnerability. Only feeling finds ground for true common cause.

Compassion in its civilized and active form is the first important

work of imagination in man (220–226). A suffering human being observed by a neutral observer is an absolute other. But if one sees oneself in the other, he becomes one's fellow. He becomes a human being by an act of the imagination. So imagination, rather than real sameness of species, is the reality of common humanity or humankindness. The young child, actually a natural savage, with his exclusive concern for self-preservation, has little in him to identify with others. The young man, trained to self-sufficiency, but with an excess of sensibility due to his new sexual energy, is the one who can extend his feeling beyond himself by acts of the imagination without rivalry. It is at this crucial stage of life, between the selfish atomism of the child and the development of his social relations, that Rousseau inserts the sentiment of compassion, which, properly trained, will temper his relations to his fellows and determine the limits of his selfishness.

In performing this high-stakes operation, Rousseau is extremely hardheaded about what human nature permits. Man's selfishness does not allow him to sacrifice his own interest to that of another. The happy other who has all the things one would like for oneself is an object of resentment and envy. A suffering man is no threat. Rousseau asserts, with characteristic boldness and harshness, that nobody can share the happiness of even his best friend without envy. He won the lottery and got all the money. I congratulate him, but actually I would prefer to have the money myself. His happiness robs me of mine. Aristotle would say that the true friend, although very rare, is possible, that he could rejoice in his friend's good luck, whereas Rousseau insists that this is simply impossible. It is only the friend's neediness which one can succor that brings out the generous, as opposed to the corrosive, sentiments. Rousseau goes so far as to say that a truly self-sufficient man would have no concern for others and that his happiness would be a kind of solitary monstrosity (221). Rousseau does not even consider the ancient view that men have a natural unity in their exercise of reason.

The spiritual development Rousseau attempts to foster goes from the first immediate but imaginary shock we feel at the sight of another's pain to the recognition that it is the other suffering and not us, that we can be of use to the other, and that this would speak well of us while benefiting the other. This may sound like hypocrisy, but it can become part of a person's self-awareness, a gentle habit of the soul, as opposed to a harsh conflict between self-interest and duty.

This development and elaboration of compassion is made possible by the emergence of sexual sensibility and imagination, but it is

made necessary because of the emergence at this moment of *amour-propre*. In relation to nature, man is absolute and has no term of comparison or rivalry. But among men, comparison of relative worth or status is inevitable. The happy man is an insult to the unhappy man, and the unhappy man is an affirmation of his worth to the happy man. To be surrounded by the rich, the famous, the titled, brings out the ugly and diminishing passions, whereas the presence of the needy brings out the gentle ones. So as a result of what I have called the hydraulics of the soul, the first social relations that the newly sensitive young man must observe are those of ordinary people whose life is made up of more pain than joy. The experience of pain for others is to be accompanied by a limited self-sufficiency gained from the early training. It is a fine line that must be walked between indifference to others' suffering, stemming from a sense of invulnerability, and envy of their supposed happiness. Since *amour-propre* must necessarily come to be in social man, everything depends on this development as to whether there will be a proud and generous relationship to other men or one of hypocritical good fellowship grounded in murderous competition.

An expansive view of man's being permits him to establish out of his inchoate sexual energy a sensitive attachment to others, to experience the same thing others experience. This permits a broader understanding of self-interest. The compassionate man has pleasures unknown to the one whose life is devoted to the cramped pursuit of self-preservation.

Although the awakening of compassion has important social consequences, Rousseau's primary intention is to respond to the either/or posed by *amour-propre*. The gentle awareness of human suffering is no threat to the pupil's self-esteem, whereas the man who is happier, or is thought to be happier, than the young Emile both usurps the first place that Emile claims and adds insult to injury by having no need of him. Compassion encourages inner independence while envy is the chorus master of all the vices connected with dependence. Compassion is not, Rousseau knows, just in itself, but it is the preparation for understanding and practicing justice. Compassion lends itself to the demand for equality because it gives Emile the experience of the life of the people as opposed to that of the rich or the noble. Emile will not be poor, but his sentiments will prefer the poor to the rich.

At a more advanced stage of this education Emile must face the reality of a society dominated by inequality and the apparent disproportion between position and merit. The natural bent of *amour-propre*

would be to covet the places of the socially privileged, and avoiding this is the most difficult part. The child Emile learned that he preferred his own simple, rustic dinner to the splendid one laid out by the rich. This was part of the education of the mouth. The mature equivalent will consist in arousing pity for outstanding men and women. The young Emile was not taught Plutarch's *Lives* because he could not have understood the moral teachings, and its effect would have been alienating, making the youngster into an imitator (243). Now, with the independence and self-satisfaction of his childhood and with compassion as a new armor against rivalry, Emile is brought to Plutarch, but in a strikingly novel way, which reverses the entire tradition. Rousseau extends compassion to the privileged, who are usually the objects of hatred and revenge. Plutarch's heroes, from the point of view of the self-sufficient man, are dependent and tragic, pitiable men and women seeking imaginary goods and suffering the most terrible consequences from that pursuit. Plutarch becomes a compendium of the splendid vices of the ancients rather than of the supreme examples of virtue. Rousseau, unlike the old moral teachers, wants no imitation on the part of his pupil because such imitation brings on all the corrosions of self-hatred. His young man is not the imitation of a classical hero but a *personality* in his own right. Tolstoy, a great reader of Rousseau, depicts this in *War and Peace* with the opposition between Prince Andrei, the noble imitator of the heroic and admirer of Napoleon, and Pierre, clumsily marching to his own drum even when he tries not to. Emile, properly educated, will experience a sympathetic horror in contemplating the emptiness of the goals of those who seek to be first among men, and will be content to be himself.

Without this disposition he would be full of moral indignation and invoke just punishment. The first experience of compassion would institute class war between those who seek equality and those who enjoy inequality. Rousseau attempts to extend compassion to both classes in order to avoid the ugly passions connected with what most people call justice. Rousseau makes a great effort to avoid moral indignation, which is the great sophist in the soul and persuades people that their wounded self-interest can be converted into a high moral calling. Compassion indicates the road to reform while keeping envy at bay.

It must be stressed again that Rousseau is constructing a rank order in the soul, not relying on one that is already there. The Platonic and Aristotelian tripartite division, into reason, spiritedness, and desire, is not the reality of the self. The self is, as Hobbes and others described it, an undifferentiated mass of desires without natural rank

order. Rousseau, following nature, reorders the passions to make those connected with self-sufficiency dominate. Politically, he corrects the teachings of self-interest, and he convinced nineteenth-century liberals (e.g. Tocqueville[27]) that democracy is best founded on the fellow-feeling of compassion. But for Emile himself, compassion is only the extension of his sensibility made possible by his unconscious sexual awakening in order to protect him from the deceptions of imagination. He is no less selfish than he was naturally before, but his selfishness now includes a pleasurable feeling connected with his discovery of his human-kindness. This is really not yet moral obligation, and when his self-interest conflicts with the dictates of compassion, he will follow his self-interest. And above all, the activity of the compassionate man is not a way of life for Emile. There is, of course, real human attachment, but it is generalized and does not constitute the bond of sociality and mutual admiration that we seek but have difficulty finding. This Rousseau will find only in love, the erotic love of a couple. Emile does not yet care for another as he cares for himself.

Rousseau is perfectly aware of the danger of the hypocrisy of compassion, the self-indulgence of caring mixed with superiority. He attempts to cure this by reading the fables, ancient and modern, that teach men the folly of vanity (240–249). But most of all he tries to achieve this end by generalizing compassion so that the young Emile does not take an individual whom he knows and likes to be the only object of compassion, but thinks as a legislator what compassion would achieve for a whole community or for mankind at large. Such feelings intimate the idea of justice prior to Emile's having heard the word "justice." From the bawling child who thinks that the world must come to a halt to succor his slightest pain, we arrive at a young man who conceives of the pains of all humanity and puts his own pains in proportion to them. Rousseau calls this sublime and gives us a hint of what he would mean by sublimation. Thus concludes the first stage of the education of erotic sensibility. This is what he meant when he said: "sentiment must enchain imagination" (219).

IX

Now Rousseau turns to the second part of that sentence, "and reason silence the opinion of man." This is the most famous part of *Emile*, "The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" (260–313). It rivals *The Social Contract* and the *Confessions* as Rousseau's most famous work; it is frequently simply extracted

from the book and taught to schoolchildren out of context. It is apparently Rousseau's statement about metaphysics. The "Profession" had undoubted power, as proved by Rousseau's banishment from society and condemnation by Catholics and Protestants alike, and by the inspiration it gave to later theology. Its teaching is all too familiar in the liberal religious positions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is ecumenical and independent of revelation. But it is clearly not Rousseau's final reflection about metaphysics or the question of God because it is explicitly put into the mouth of another and is less radical than reflections pronounced in Rousseau's own name.[28] It is necessary but difficult to understand the "Profession's" place in the plan of *Emile*, applying as it does to the young Rousseau as opposed to the young Emile. Properly understood, the "Profession" reveals the deepest stratum of Rousseau's thought and seeks to find an entirely new dimension of the soul.* The "Profession of Faith" is nothing less than Rousseau's presentation of the sublime, the underlying experience of greatness that anchors the profound soul. The quest for God is a result of erotic sensibility, and the necessity for this reflection comes from the need to regulate erotic expression. This is the foundation of the notion of sublimation and provides its lofty model for the sublime. It is both interesting in itself and very up-to-date for us. The impulse emanating from it transformed not only religious thinking but also literature, music, and painting. Not least, it motivated the system of Immanuel Kant, who attempted to ground Rousseau's sentiments. Kant took Rousseau's teaching to be the culmination of culture, that is, the harmonious and unified perfection of civilized man.

Ordinarily civilization means only a honing and exacerbation of

* This dimension is shrewdly assessed by one of the most intelligent theologians of the twentieth century, Karl Barth, in discussing Rousseau's article on "Genius" in his *Dictionnaire de musique*:

This is not the eighteenth century anymore, it is not the genius of Bach nor the genius of Haydn (quite apart from the fact that a book of instruction in accordance with their way of making music could scarcely have contained an article on "genius" at all), it is not Mozart either, but it is unmistakably Beethoven, Schubert and Mendelssohn, line for line. Music which holds the universe in thrall, which reflects ideas in the form of feeling, which aims at expressing and awakening the passions, which as feeling for life addresses itself in a mysterious way to the feeling for life, music which does not wish to be understood as beautiful, but as enchanting and only in a delirium, music which according to whether it moves one or not, reveals a kind of predestination to blessedness or damnation—all that might very well be found in Schleiermacher's Address on Religion, *but not in any book previous to the age of Goethe, nor in any heart or head either. Anyone who read this article in those days was immediately called upon in the field of music to decide whether to receive the new message, that art is prophetic of feeling, as something rich with new promise or as something in the nature of a declaration of war; and whether he should welcome or hate it accordingly.*[29]

the intensity of private satisfaction, whereas, according to Kant's interpretation of Rousseau, culture requires the generalization of the private so as to encompass the public. But the teaching on compassion in *Emile* does not complete this work. Tension remained between self-interest and the interest of the whole, along with the inevitable primacy of the former. The Savoyard Vicar's teaching, if successful, would suppress the claims of the private and brutish natural man.

Another way of putting it is that Rousseau has given the sexual destiny of Emile's desires the slip by attaching them to compassion, extending sensibility from the individual to the species. But he has given Emile no way of thinking about the opinions and practices of men in matters sexual that will protect that attachment. There is a need to correct calculating reason by making it sensitive reasoning. But most of all, the Savoyard Vicar provides an object of intense satisfaction far beyond those that result from pitying others.

To begin with, Emile's education has been totally silent about what would have been the most important theme of education in his time, that is, religion. Rousseau's silence was heavy with disapproval of the Christian, both Catholic and Protestant, treatment of children. He implicitly accuses the biblical teaching, with its burden of "nos" and its attribution of original sin to all, of corrupting children, of dividing them and robbing them of the autonomy of their judgment (98–101). It is only when the adolescent senses of civilized man cry out for enlightenment that the quest for God becomes a felt need on the part of pupil and teacher alike. The longing for pure spirituality now seeks its fulfillment. This longing is fraught with the greatest dangers, for the imagination easily turns it into that maddest and most dependent form of ignorance called superstition. Rousseau here relies on the most fundamental meaning of enlightenment: liberating men from superstition. The newly vital imagination must gain its satisfaction only after being subjected to reason. But how can a purely sensual being such as man even have abstract thoughts? Rousseau presents the movement from sensibility or sensuality to abstract thought as a kind of miracle. It would seem that he attributes this movement to the miraculous seminal power that puberty provides.

The mystery of eroticism is encapsulated in these reflections. The mystery is how spirituality can arise in a being who seems so material as Rousseau's man. Rousseau must tread a fine line between superstition and unbelief. Naturally, man is superstitious, Rousseau tells us in a surprising confession (134ff., 256). It is surprising because Rousseau has seemed to tell us elsewhere that natural man has no imagination. That natural man seems to be a kind of model con-

structed by Rousseau by which to judge man, whereas here he explains that without enlightenment man will inevitably interpret natural physical phenomena as acts of will threatening or protecting him. This is why the early education of Emile is directed to understanding corporeal nature and bending him to unquestioning acceptance of nature's yoke.

The "Profession of Faith" gives a model of the kind of reflection appropriate in matters of religion, a model free of the distortions resulting from man's fear. One might ask, "Why not be an unbeliever?" Rousseau answers that the unbeliever has no standard for judgment beyond the maelstrom of society's opinions. One must not forget that Rousseau is trying to avoid the power of priests while fully aware that the man liberated from the priests, in the absence of any other authority, is most likely to be a slave to public opinion. The boy Emile could count on instinct to preserve his independence. He knows that the simple country dinner tastes better than the elaborate one given by the rich and powerful. But his sexual instinct has become so plastic as to give no guidance. God seems to be the only resource. Social man must begin to think, and he inevitably arrives at a view or an imagination of the first causes of all things. So experience of a higher order confirmed by reason is a necessary part of education at a time when the passions grow great and imagination becomes unbridled. Thus a balance is kept between passion and enlightenment. This restores, on the level of society, the natural equilibrium of the savage.

The Savoyard Vicar presents a new kind of rationalism, which I shall call sensitive rationalism. It is intended to satisfy the demand for reason while avoiding the modern uses of reason as the arm of selfish satisfaction. God, as anchor of independence and object of satisfaction, is the goal of the religious views expressed by the Savoyard Vicar. This is no mere civil or useful religion. It is a powerful temptation and satisfaction for the religious longings in man. No poets would be inspired with religious enthusiasms in reading Hobbes or Locke. But Rousseau did indeed solicit such enthusiasms and reinjected the religiosity that Enlightenment tried to suppress. He states the problem simply:

> Let a Turk who finds Christianity so ridiculous at Constantinople go and see how they think of Mohammedanism at Paris! It is especially in matters of religion that opinion triumphs. But we who pretend to shake off the yoke of opinion in everything, we who want to grant nothing to authority, we who

> want to teach nothing to our Emile which he could not learn by himself in every country, in what religion shall we raise him? To what sect shall we join the man of nature? The answer is quite simple, it seems to me. We shall join him to neither this one nor that one, but we shall put him in a position to choose the one to which the best use of his reason ought to lead him. (260)

The stakes are in all ways very high.

Rousseau seems to present what is called natural religion, that is, a religion accessible to all men through their natural faculties unassisted by the revelations of scripture. This is the kind of theology one finds in Aristotle's metaphysics and the religious reflections of modern philosophy. But in Rousseau's hands natural religion is quickly transformed into the religion of nature. The beauty and order of nature inspire an enthusiasm that we know all too well since Rousseau. This is a far remove from the matter-of-fact accounts of natural religion in earlier thinkers. A new kind of belief becomes the capstone of Enlightenment, replacing distorted and impure beliefs of imperfectly civilized man. The beauty of nature's order acts as a standard and as a satisfaction compared with the disorder of society and the paltriness of its satisfactions. And the hints of the limitless power of the God who lurks behind nature give the pleasurable but frightening experience of the sublime. Gone is the contempt for nature that results from the biblical accounts of a God who is so superior to nature that we can learn nothing about Him from it, who shakes our attachment to our senses and our reason and demands a faith against all odds. Again Kant gives voice to Rousseau's intentions when he says that a man with a feeling for the beauty of nature can hardly be simply corrupt or immoral.[30]

Moreover, as Arthur Melzer has said, Rousseau replaces faith by sincerity in the profession of faith.[31] Faith means belief in another, in the mysterious God who exists objectively. Sincerity puts the onus on the subjective certainty of the self without reference to further authority. The shift in focus is reflected in our parlance when we say we have faith in someone as opposed to saying we are in good faith. The primacy of the latter reflects the dignity and legislative power of the individual. It is a proud affirmation of the dignity of the self rather than the pious annihilation of the self before a higher dignity.

Reciting ancient propitiatory oaths to the angry gods, Rousseau undertakes the dangerous task of speaking about them. Rather than giving a discursive account of his theology and how it suits Emile,

Rousseau tells a story about how a good priest saved him from corruption, the second of three passages in *Emile* about Rousseau's own development (135–137, 260–313, 344–355).[32] These passages outline how he, so deeply affected by the injustices of society, liberated himself and was hence able to educate men so as to be free. He is the philosopher who experiences the distortions of social man and founds an education that produces a man who does not require Rousseau's genius to be free. The young Jean-Jacques is very different from Emile, in fact he may be said to be Emile's contrary. Whereas Emile was raised according to nature, that is, free from the opinions of men, Jean-Jacques was caught in the maelstrom of their prejudices.

The first story about the young Jean-Jacques tells of him as a ten-year-old orphan who is taken into the home of a distant relative, a Protestant pastor with a son of the same age (135–136). Jean-Jacques cannot bear his dependency and helplessly tries to make himself the equal of his spoiled cousin Bernard, whom Jean-Jacques does not regard as his equal. Competition for primacy is the whole business of his life at an age when Emile does not even recognize the existence of others. He tries to show his courage by recovering a Bible from a dark church. It almost ends in a terrible humiliation as the demons of the night nearly defeat him in the church. But he triumphs over the kingdom of darkness because of his even greater fear of the laughter of the august company assembled by his cold step-parents. He is especially sensitive to the presence there of a young woman who has induced premature sexual desire in him. All kinds of fears and shames awake his wounded *amour-propre* and launch him into a furious battle for recognition. In the *Confessions* this young woman is said to have punished him in such a way as to make him seek erotic pleasure in punishment.[33] All the bad actors are paraded in this little story—rivalrousness, religion, and premature sexual desire.

The "Profession of Faith" picks up the story of Jean-Jacques in his adolescence. The Savoyard Vicar's teaching addresses itself to a young man in the grips of angry indignation, full of envy, resentment, lust, and the spirit of vengeance. Wounded *amour-propre* is the center of his soul. The addressee of the "Profession of Faith" tells us as much about it as does its substantive content. Jean-Jacques had to leave his Protestant hometown as a result of an escapade and became a destitute fugitive in an Italian city. The young rascal, so charming in his picaresque adventures, in order to survive converts to the dominant religion of the place, Catholicism. Entering into a home for converts, he becomes the victim of all the corruptions so vividly characterized by Enlightenment antitheological ire against Catholi-

cism. He is a prisoner of hypocrites, an object of perverse sexual harassment, the pawn of unbelieving priests concerned only with comfort or worldly power. His just complaints turn him into the accused. He ends up utterly alone and without resources: he almost came to have "the morals of a tramp and the morality of an atheist" (263). The disorder of society and the triumph of injustice in the world made him concerned only to triumph in the opinions of men. Spite is his dominant passion. He is still sexually innocent but only out of a shameful timidity. As a result of his experience in the almshouse, he is disgusted by sex, but has a libertine's opinions about it, preparing the way for a degraded erotic life. Here we find again united the themes of *amour-propre*, religion, and sex.

The Vicar enters as *deus ex machina* for the salvation of Jean-Jacques' soul, whether it be for this life or the one afterward. His story is also interesting and partially parallels that of Jean-Jacques. He is disgraced in the Church because of his independence and is barred from all advancement. In spite of this, he has a gentle and pious demeanor in punctiliously fulfilling the obligations of Catholic ritual. He is in outward observance a pious Catholic while not hating the dogmas of Protestantism and open to a humane ecumenism. The Vicar suffers from the quarrel among the sects and their conflict with the true religion. For Jean-Jacques, he is another loser like himself, an object of puzzlement but not of emulation.

The Vicar's specific crime was sleeping with unmarried girls (267). Rousseau, of course, presents the celibacy of priests as unnatural, therefore justifying certain kinds of promiscuity on their part. They are left with the choice of maidens who have not yet sworn their marriage vows or married women who have. The Vicar chooses the naturally more innocuous, while the Church, respecting vulgar opinion, preferred that its priests have sexual relations with married parishioners whose offspring can be attributed to the cuckolded husband, thus avoiding scandal. The Catholics prefer to soil the most sacred vows in order to silence the rumors. The theological-sexual problem is recapitulated in the Vicar as well as in the young Jean-Jacques. Rousseau wryly remarks that the Vicar is still "not too well corrected" (265) in his sexual habits.

The Vicar is an enigma for Jean-Jacques because he seems to have Protestant beliefs while rigorously observing Catholic practice. He is a model of how a wise man adapts himself to the practices of the nations while keeping his inner self free. Thus he provides a kind of response to both the religious and the sexual problems with which Jean-Jacques is unable to cope. The Vicar, like Jean-Jacques, stands

between the two sects, Protestant and Catholic, and this position illuminates the religious madness. On opposite sides of arbitrary lines drawn on a mere map men have contrary views of salvation and all the most important things of life and are willing to kill those who do not share them. But anyone who tries to cross these spiritual lines must be disloyal to his father, his country, and his religion. Since too much depends on family and national attachment to leave such decisions to every individual, the Vicar states the practical principle that everyone should adhere to his father's religion (311, 381). But this is too conventional a solution to satisfy anyone who thinks. So he takes two individuals who, against their wills, each in his own way, have stepped outside the limits of their fathers' religions and have had to think them through for themselves. This provides a dim reflection of the problem Rousseau faces in starting all over again with the natural man, the new Adam, who will require a new or natural religion. He never addresses this problem directly and the Vicar's "Profession" is a kind of halfway house between the religions of the nations and the religion of nature. The religions turn out to have the same incoherence as do the different ways and laws of the nations. On the one hand, they express the furious passions of the nations, involved with all their injustices and hypocrisies, while, on the other hand, they point toward the highest things men have in common and toward images of justice.

The Vicar has found a standpoint outside the opinions of men that allows him to judge them, and provides him with an independent source of satisfaction. In his education of Jean-Jacques he at first presents himself as a victim just like Jean-Jacques. It does not occur to Jean-Jacques to regard his humble priestly pal as an object of admiration. He possesses none of the goods that Jean-Jacques thinks constitute happiness. Jean-Jacques thinks that the ones who are on top in society are the happy ones and either schemes to be among them or moralistically denounces them. Eventually, however, the curiosity of this unusual boy directs itself toward the priest who lives with equanimity in what would seem to be an unbearable situation. Finally the priest asserts to the incredulous Jean-Jacques that he himself is the happy man (266). Against his inclination Jean-Jacques wonders at the priest's standpoint outside, and the priest offers to explain it to him.

For his "Profession" the Vicar very carefully chooses a gorgeous locale with the background of mountains, rivers, and flowing valleys. Rousseau says that it is "the most beautiful scene that can strike the human eye" (266). This passage reminds us of an earlier moment when Emile, in an equally beautiful setting, discovers the seasonal

changes of the sun's position in the sky, and Rousseau warns us not to expect the child to have any awareness whatsoever of that beauty. The ecstasy of the peculiar beauty of the seasons, the beauty of nature and its relations to the sentimental life, are impossible for Emile at this stage of life (168–169, 181). His is a purely material mathematical observation of the astronomical facts. After puberty the ecstatic condition that gives him eyes to see the beautiful and the sublime comes into being. The seminal fluids provide the missing ingredient without which nature is but matter in motion, whether its beauty is in the things themselves or is a product of man's creative or poetic power. Suffice it to say that to address his particular target the Vicar's rhetoric requires erotic sensibility. The enthusiasm for nature is the ground of contempt for the artificiality of social life.

The "Profession" is a modified Cartesian meditation, an attempt to find the minimum certitudes for a thoughtful man to live by. The Vicar underlines more distinctly than does Descartes the moral dimension of his metaphysical undertaking. The contradictions in the social and theological order have so uprooted his habitual principles of moral conduct that he is forced to go back to the roots and begin all over again if he is not to be buffeted solely by the winds of fortune. The first certitude is the thinking subject, but the essence of man is individual feeling rather than universal reason. "I feel, therefore I am" goes alongside "I think, therefore I am." The method is what one might call the logic of the heart rather than the logic of the mind, and sincerity, that judge whose authority is so mysterious, is the arbiter of the proofs of God's existence. Although he is always aware that there are unrefuted objections to his conclusions, the Vicar is sure that his sincerity overbears the reasonings of his critics. He outlines Kant's critical project, the essence of which is to bridle metaphysical imperialism by its command, "Thus far proud reason and no further." Both the Vicar and Kant wish to silence reason's attempts to disprove that God exists. They want a religion that, if not reason itself, at least is not unreasonable.

The first principle the Vicar uncovers is based upon the fact of motion. There must be a first cause of motion and that is the first attribute of God that the doubter encounters. There are two substances—matter and will. Will or power somehow lies behind this world of continuous motion that we experience (270–274). I would not hesitate to identify this dark force with the terrifying sublime that underlies the Romantic artist's awareness.

The second principle of certitude is order, that is, nature. Nature reveals an intelligible order, whatever its status, that cannot help but

attract any thoughtful man (275–276). The Vicar means here not primarily the order found in reductionist physics but those obvious phenomena of growth or teleological motion present in the most ordinary experience, especially in the plant and animal kingdoms. These correspond to the energy, especially erotic energy, of the young Rousseau and Emile. Rousseau, as did Goethe after him, concentrates on such phenomena in an attempt to recover a world in which man can live fully. Rousseau spent much time in his later years botanizing.[34] The Vicar thinks that anyone insensitive to this splendid order is only partially human, even if abstract reasoning might seem to support him. The admiration of nature's realm I will call the love of the beautiful, the aesthetic accompaniment of the sublime. This order, unlike the sublime, is totally present and accessible to contemplation and understanding. It is pleasant without an element of the terrifying.

The principles of will and order in nature guarantee a realm of splendid contemplation that not only satisfies reason, like Plato's contemplation of transcendent Ideas, but stimulates energetic imagination. These first two principles, although they are not uncontroversial, belong to the attributes of the God of the philosophers and contain little admixture of hope. The Vicar's next step, toward moral obligation, is much more tenuous and fraught with difficulty. But this is where his enterprise necessarily takes him. He begins by looking at the place of the species, man, within the ordered whole of nature. Man is the best of the animals in both his bodily and his mental powers. No one would choose to be anything other than man if he had his choice among the animals. The first glance that man takes at himself is most satisfying to his collective *amour-propre* (277–278).[35] It is well to note here that the Vicar is much more certain of man's special status within the ordered whole than is Rousseau himself in his accounts of man in the state of nature, where man is less distinguishable from the brutes and where one finds proto-evolutionary suggestions.[36] The Savoyard Vicar either is more certain than is Rousseau himself of the purposeful ordering of nature or takes his bearings not from the state of nature but from the point of view of developed man in civil society. But when one looks from man's exalted station in the order of nature to society, one finds not order but chaos and the worse ruling over the better. Everywhere power, money, and family triumph over virtue, and there is no proportion between merit and desert. So the choice of the moral life appears unsupported.

Nonetheless, the Vicar sees in this bleak perspective not the proof of a world indifferent to morality, where justice is the benefit of the

stronger, but the proof of man's most distinctive faculty, his freedom. There must be abuse of freedom in order for men to deserve praise for their proper use of it. There is a clear morality in concern for the common good. The concern for the whole or the exercise of the general will, or as Kant put it, the categorical imperative, is easy to understand but difficult to practice. It is likely that most men will order their lives according to their private good. Yet true self-esteem, the highest of goods, is the reward for crushing private interest in favor of the common good. The good civil society has a legislation like that of the order of the whole as planned by God, but since God leaves the governance of humans to humans, it is of course less likely to be achieved. Otherwise man would live instinctually without choice like the brutes, without the dignity of responsibility. Man is an imperfect God in his little sphere, endowed with an irrepressible certainty of his free capacity to choose or to will and his capacity to order.

The Vicar traces the private versus the public inclinations of man to a dualism in his nature following from the two substances—matter or extension versus mind—that are postulated by his teaching. Man's body is private and vulnerable and leads him to be concerned only with his own preservation or pleasures and pains. His mind or his soul partakes of a community with other men and looks to the general. Virtue or morality consists in the triumph of soul over body. The two substances have different natures or constitutions and they are uneasy partners. The soul is not made to serve the body and the body serves the soul reluctantly and only when whipped.

Although the Vicar insists on this traditional and readily grasped dualism, up to this point there has been no such dualism in *Emile*. Its absence is part of the radicalism of Rousseau's own teaching. Emile has followed only his inclination, and to the extent he has begun to be concerned with others, he has done so only by an expansion of his feelings without any tension akin to that between morality and self-interest. Emile, at least thus far, is seamless, whereas the Vicar praises a divided man whose glory is in the victory of the higher over the lower. We must remember this difference when we come to reflect on Rousseau's own final judgment of the Vicar's sublime teaching.

In order to avoid a completely chaotic freedom for man the Vicar is constrained to prescribe a guiding principle for his freedom. He invokes the conscience, which is one of the most vexed and controversial themes in moral thought (279ff., esp. 289). The Vicar argues that in all of us this regulating principle causes us to take pleasure at the sight of justice or concern with the common good and to feel pain at the sight of injustice or concern only with one's own individual

good. This voice or sentiment thus both directs action and rewards and punishes the man to whom it speaks. Just as hunger and other such passions are the voices of the body, so is conscience the voice of the soul, which is itself akin to the animating principle of the cosmos. It is the felt expression of the universal. Conscience is particularly esteemed in the Christian tradition and is therefore peculiarly appropriate to this enlightened ecclesiastic, even though his account of it is closer to a philosophic one than to the Christian.

In contrast to the Vicar, Jean-Jacques almost never speaks of conscience to Emile, although Rousseau insists in his own short statement at the end of the "Profession" that morality cannot be preferable to immorality without the sanctions of conscience (314–315). The only thing in *Emile* up to now that has any kinship to conscience as described by the Vicar is the ultimate generalized pity or compassion that motivates Emile in his relations to all men and is thus somehow legislative. But that generalized pity is not in mortal combat with Emile's own self-interest. It does not constitute a triumph in a divided man but is itself an inclination energized by sensuality. To the extent it conflicted with the more primitive inclinations, it would have to give way. Emile is to be a whole man at one with this earth. The Savoyard Vicar accepts the imperfectness of this life in the light of another, imagined or real. His account of conscience, and hence of a real and noble morality, is an absolutization of compassion, which Rousseau insists is real in man but not absolutely authoritative as the voice of true morality.

The Vicar must take one more step. However much morality depends upon the purity of intentions, no decent man can rest satisfied with simply unrewarded justice or with no relation between morality and happiness. The human longing for happiness may not correspond to the demands of morality and may even have to be subordinated to them, but the simple opposition between happiness and morality would be too tragic to bear and would appear to give witness to a godless universe. Yet, the evidence for the convergence of the two is not strong. Rousseau's own beloved Plutarch is just another witness to the victories of the Caesars over the Catos. The defense of morality, at least in the Vicar's situation, requires the possibility and the postulate of another life where rewards are proportioned to deeds, not so much for the sake of vengeance against the malefactors, but for the sake of vindicating the decent. The peak of the pyramid built by the Vicar is the most philosophically doubtful of his arguments, that is, the immortality of the soul. The good man is moral not for the sake of eternal happiness but for the sake of

morality itself, but he must be allowed to hope for eternal happiness when he sacrifices this worldly happiness to morality (284). This is the Vicar's most effective argument for the absoluteness of morality when presenting it to a doubting and tormented youngster.*

The culmination of the Vicar's sentimental meditations is the life that Jean-Jacques sees him leading. Assured of his place in the cosmos and enjoying satisfactions that do not depend upon political regimes or the conditions of society, he does good according to the natural religion while adapting himself to the aberrations of the particular sects (311). His earthly joy comes from his good conscience and his ecstatic contemplation of the intelligible order of nature. These are the natural or the permanent things that do not depend on men.

Yet for all the power and eloquence of the Vicar's "Profession" it surely does not represent Rousseau's own last word about the right way of understanding things or living a good life. The simplest proof of this is that Rousseau, who regarded his own life as exemplary, was very unlike the Savoyard Vicar. Moreover, Emile, the best of the ordinary men, does not become an ecclesiastic but a lover, husband, and father, none of which the Vicar is. In the dramatic context of *Emile*, the Vicar acts as a cure or a palliative to Jean-Jacques' *amour-propre*, incarnating a way of life in which self-knowledge does not depend upon the arbitrary opinions of men. The Vicar's great speech is fraught with difficulties, but his Orpheus-like eloquence silences Jean-Jacques' objections (261, 294). The spell, however, will be broken, as we shall soon see.

The problem is that the fidelity to the voice of conscience adopted by the Vicar leads to a certain otherworldliness. The happiness that a man seeks is not available to him on this earth if he lives morally. This world is drained of much of its charm, and there is a longing for

* In order to remind ourselves of the significance of the "Profession," we can see that Kant's great system is meant to ground on the highest level the intention of the Vicar's morality. Kant's entire philosophical undertaking was deeply influenced by his encounter with *Emile*. The Vicar responds to the three great questions of serious men and of the philosophers: what can I know? what ought I to do? and what may I hope? Kant's three postulates—God, freedom, and immortality—are the Vicar's own, and just as the Vicar cannot prove them, so Kant postulates them, and, more rigorously than the Vicar, proves that metaphysics cannot refute them. Likewise, the two things that cause wonderment in Kant, the starry firmament above and the moral law within, are identical to those of the Vicar.[37] It is not sufficiently understood, however, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world, how much Kant was inspired by Rousseau, and how much more the latter provided Kant's inspiration than did Hume's critique of causality. This is because the profundity and the necessity of Rousseau's battle for human dignity in the world of scientific atomism do not touch very deeply persons more interested in the "theory of knowledge" than in how to live a good life.[38]

death. The Vicar offers compensations in this world, but they are pale compared to those offered in the next.

Another aspect of this problem is the Vicar's attitude toward sex. Rousseau indicates that sexual satisfaction is a natural necessity, without which even profounder distortions of the soul come into being. The Vicar could have satisfied this need if he had been a Protestant, as Rousseau had been, and able to marry. But even Protestantism taints sexual expression with the poison of original sin. The Vicar still continues to have relations with young girls, but his sexual pleasure has to be treated as nothing more significant than the pleasure of scratching when one itches. It is not a fulfillment of his highest aspiration, which is unerotic. His contemplations have no admixture of the Platonic eroticism that somehow unites body and soul and which Rousseau attempts to recover on the new continent of modernity. The Vicar's erotic life is a kind of trash can that does not contribute to his moral vocation, whereas Emile's own education tends to make his erotic life the most important thing. The whole organic structure of Emile's education strains toward a unified eroticism that itself can found moral obligation or make a contract between human beings that engages their hearts and their souls. Emile never speaks or acts as though he knew of the Vicar's point of view. He speaks of God only at the summit of romantic excitement (426). His is the God of lovers rather than the God of the moral man. In some sense the Vicar's "Profession" is meant to make the thoughtful reader measure the difference between conventional morality and the new morality that Rousseau proposes.

But this is not the whole story. The "Profession of Faith" is an exquisitely constructed mechanism that addresses itself to the ordinary practices of mankind. It is too much to expect that most men will have Emile's education and that their lusts will correspond to their duties. Some kind of limit or repression of their bodily desires is likely to be necessary, and Rousseau offers a gentle version of Christianity to accomplish this end. The "Profession" points toward life after death while still leaving joys to be tasted in this world. It is Christian, but it is not exclusively Christian, meaning to say that all men could practice this religion without being humiliated by a conversion to Christianity. The "Profession" provides a basis for an ecumenism without disloyalty to one's own people and religion. It unshackles the "few great cosmopolitan souls"[39] of whom the real priests are jealous. The priests can regard the Vicar's situation as a punishment for his sexual proclivities, which in themselves lead toward nature, but the real reason they have demoted him is that he is

free of their preachments. In the second part of the "Profession," where the Vicar treats revealed religion (295–313), he provides a compendium of all the conventional objections to the revealed texts that are the source of the exclusive articles of faith at the root of the dictum "outside the Church, no salvation." These texts force the abandonment of reason, encourage fanaticism, and guarantee that reason will be at war with religion. A book read in this way, whether it is the Bible or Plutarch (which Rousseau delicately uses as his example) (240–244), alienates man from himself and makes it impossible to rely on sincerity. This is what underlies Rousseau's confession "I hate books" (184). The proper way to read books is indicated by the Vicar's reading of the Gospel. The Vicar cannot be sure that Jesus was the son of God, but he (unlike Rousseau, who at the end of his life most enjoys reading Plutarch[40]) has a taste for reading the Gospel because Jesus is the highest example of conduct, whether he is the man-God or simply man at his best (307–308). Rousseau failed in his own personal attempt to walk the thin line between reason and revelation but he succeeded in transforming his successors. As Karl Barth tells us, Rousseau actually changed much of religious doctrine and practice, and we see his effects all around us.[41] The botched creation proclaimed by Blake and the call for a new beginning where nature and man are in harmony are a reflection of Rousseau's articulation of the religious problem. The Vicar boldly tells the young Rousseau to acknowledge God among the philosophers (i.e., the atheists) and to preach tolerance among the fanatics (i.e., the priests) (313). This may all seem boring to us now because it is so familiar, but it was an ingenious and in many ways an admirable project.

The ambiguous character of Rousseau's own teaching about religion is expressed in the long footnote with which Rousseau concludes the Savoyard Vicar digression (312–314). In it he does something unexampled in philosophy: he makes a defense of fanaticism—political, moral, romantic. Although in the body of the text he shares the Enlightenment concern for and hatred of intolerance, with its conviction that one's nonbelieving neighbors are damned, he has also come to the conclusion that the tolerance of the philosophers issues in a selfish indifference. Reason is most frequently a tool of the particular passions and dissolves the humane sentiments in the acid of its criticism. So fanaticism is indeed dangerous and ugly. But it is powerful, self-forgetting, and above the petty creature comforts of the bourgeois. The choice, as Rousseau seems to outline it, is between ignoble reasoning and noble fanaticism—political, moral, romantic. This observation casts a dark shadow over Rousseau's text

when one recognizes that he gives at least partial license not only to the extremes of the French revolutionaries who admired him so much, but also to the other even more extreme fanaticisms, apparently for the first time blessed by philosophers or intellectuals, that characterize the two centuries since Rousseau wrote. To meditate on this important question one must ask whether the great fathers of liberalism had not become easygoing in their theological-political-moral teachings, leaving Rousseau with the choice between selfish reason and dedicated extremism.

X

For the young Rousseau, the Vicar's influence can be crudely understood to be a course of study in sexual restraint. The Vicar provides a glimpse of the grandest, the most splendid, the most exalted objects to which man, this vulnerable brute, can attain, and he does so in such a way that most men can at least admire his lofty disinterestedness. Rousseau indicates that this loftiness is to be attained by a ladder constructed out of imagination, *amour-propre*, and sexual energy. In the Vicar's case, sexual energy is converted into his asexual contemplations. The most complete teaching of *Emile* is to be found in Emile's life. Not only is that life powered by sexual energy, but its explicit, conscious fulfillment is found in the sexual life. If the splendor of the Vicar's teaching can be combined with the natural ends of man here on this earth, Rousseau may, as Kant said, be said to have solved the problem of culture.[42] Romantic love and the family are to be the answers to the problem. As conscience is the Vicar's answer to the problem of noncontingent obligation or contract, Rousseau tries to find the answer in the love of a couple rightly understood.

The Vicar's education of Jean-Jacques immediately precedes what one might call the sexual revelation designed for Emile, "The true moment of nature comes at last" (316). He has compressed the seminal fluids and they produce energy as does boiling water in a steam engine. His sentiments have enchained his imagination and reason silenced the opinions of man. Rousseau hopes, by his various tactics, to have maintained Emile's ignorance of the true meaning of his desire up to the late teens. He knows that as soon as a young man really knows it, he will make the fulfillment of his desire his primary goal. Therefore this satisfaction must be promised to him, and no study that does not relate to it will take. The simplest thing is to marry him off immediately, which is probably what nature wants. But since man is

now so far from nature, force and fraud are necessary to fulfill nature's intention, inasmuch as the fulfillment of society's moral demands is not part of nature's scheme. The choice usually appears as one between libertinism or asceticism, each obviously unsatisfactory. Rousseau suggests that the joys of libertinism can be combined with the highest moral calling, thus avoiding the tedious shuttle back and forth between indulgence and repression, which is to be found not only in individuals but in the habits of societies. Rousseau, from now until the end of *Emile*, shows how this is to be done.

First, the boy must be told. He has been prepared to listen because his teacher has never bored him with moralisms that he suspects the teacher does not himself believe. Emile is curious and trusting, and his early independence and satisfaction will continue in his passage to adulthood. He does not have the child's usual sense that childhood is an enforced discipline to be cast aside when he grows up. Not for him the former choirboy's or Eagle Scout's fall into debauchery. He is a partner with his teacher and does not feel that his enlightenment is at odds with what his teacher wants to teach. The young Emile divines that what the teacher has to teach him is as important for him as was the Vicar's teaching for Jean-Jacques. And just as the Vicar prepared Jean-Jacques' passions to be attentive to his speech, so must the teacher prepare Emile's passions.

"The pedant and the teacher say pretty much the same things, but the former says them on every occasion, while the latter says them only when he is sure of their effect" (319). An erotic rhetoric must be invented. Plato's *Phaedrus* must be reinvented. The passage on rhetoric is for me one of the most telling in the whole of Rousseau's amazing book. Rousseau teaches us about the subtlety and grandeur of the arts of persuasion, the knowledge of nature and human nature required by a teacher. The most human form of speech, as Aristotle tells us, is that used by men to communicate their knowledge or their understanding of good and bad and of just and unjust.[43] A science of the passions is requisite to this noble persuasion, and has its proper place in the great lost art of rhetoric. After having used his last deception to put Emile off the scent, engaging him in the lusty, sanguinary hunt in the forests where the sport vies with the erotic charms of the nymphs, Rousseau summarizes the modern condition with respect to rhetoric: "I observe that in the modern age men no longer have a hold on one another except by force or by self-interest; the ancients, by contrast, acted much more by persuasion and by the affections of the soul because they did not neglect the language of signs" (321). For the economists, all rhetoric

consists of dollar signs, and the tyrants speak endlessly to captive audiences who are too frightened to listen. Persuasion, as it was practiced by the ancients, appealed to grander and nobler motives corresponding to powerful beliefs about the world.

The gods were witnesses to men's oaths, and they saw everything, whereas men can know only appearances:

> Stones, trees, heaps of rocks consecrated by these acts and thus made respectable to barbaric men, were the pages of this book, which was constantly open to all eyes. The well of the oath, the well of the living and seeing, the old oak of Mamre, the mound of the witness, these were the crude but august monuments of the sanctity of contracts. None would have dared to attack these monuments with a sacrilegious hand, and the faith of men was more assured by the guarantee of these mute witnesses than it is today by all the vain rigor of the laws. (321)

All of these references are to the Hebrew Bible, and, as is so often the case with Rousseau, he gives early witness to a theme that began to preoccupy the minds of intelligent Europeans a century later. Rousseau is speaking of the demystification or the disenchantment of the world resulting from a new science that wiped the slate clean and left no place for the tales about the gods and their involvement in human affairs. This demystification is the center of Rousseau's doubts about the parallelism between the progress of civilization and the moral improvement of man, who is now moved like the atoms, which are pushed by other atoms rather than persuaded by noble rhetoric. Nature must be full of gods in order to motivate men, and the persuasive rhetoric has to have this as a corollary in order to strike awe into men.

As he uses the Bible for the gods, he uses Roman practice for the language or signs that persuade and bind political man. Again, the symbols have disappeared. Therefore, the art of speech that appeals to such things has disappeared. A modern orator would make empty discourses about Caesar's wounds; an Antony produces the body and points to them. That is the style of ancient rhetoric. Rousseau appears to believe that the living presence of the gods has been made impossible by Enlightenment reasoning and that political myth and ritual have disappeared because the state is now just a business contract. As always, Rousseau's arguments can cut both ways. He regrets the human cost of Enlightenment. But he also believes that its

reasonings are true and that it is good to be liberated from the tyranny of false and fanatic belief. He uses ancient rhetoric in order to show the force of persuasion, but he will propose a new enchantment of the world intended to regain the advantages of such rhetoric but without its obscurantism.

Rousseau wants to fill the world with poetic imaginations, dreams about love. The scene he chooses as background for his sexual revelation is akin to the one the Savoyard Vicar chose for his religious revelation. Rousseau wants to inspire awe by means of the splendor of the setting and, as it were, give tongues to the mountains, the valleys, and the rivers. This is the very model of the Romantic use of nature; the scenery sets the stage for the passions and itself shares them. The mystery of human generation fits into a nature that is itself full of human meanings. Rousseau wishes to reestablish on modern grounds Plato's erotic nature, where everything is striving toward a fulfillment and perfection, as opposed to the randomly moving atoms, which have no such longing. The sublime experience of nature to which we are induced by the "Profession of Faith" remains. With the Vicar, however, the culmination is a rejection of the sexual or a consigning of it to the dross we must bear with in this life. With the sexual revelation, sex becomes the core of the highest experience and will be a part of the divine on this earth.

Rousseau prepares us to hear what he will tell this healthy adolescent about the meaning of sex, which is driving him now without his knowing it. But he stops short and tells us that it is impossible to talk about these things today, especially in the French language, without being obscene instead of sublime. Thus he leaves it to our imagination to invest this most important instruction, which is usually conveyed by rascally servants, corrupt playmates, or scientific quacks. The point is to give Emile the poetry along with the merely material facts. The very idea of Emile's sexual fulfillment must act as a restraint against trivial or debauched sexuality.

> . . . if in speaking of this inconceivable mystery of generation, one joins to the idea of the allure given to this act by the Author of nature the idea of the exclusive attachment which makes it delicious, and the idea of the duties of fidelity and of modesty which surround it and redouble its charm in fulfilling its object; if, in depicting marriage to him not only as the sweetest of associations but as the most inviolable and holiest of all contracts, one tells him forcefully all the reasons which make so sacred a bond respectable to all men, and which bring

> hatred and maledictions to whoever dares to stain its purity; if one presents him with a striking and true picture of the horrors of debauchery, of its foolish degradation, of the gradual decline by which a first disorder leads to them all and finally drags to destruction whoever succumbs to it. . . . (324)

Here again one glimpses the central thrust of Romanticism and sees why adultery became the underlying theme of so many Romantic novels. Marriage is the true human attachment and is the contract of human connectedness. It is more profound than, and a prerequisite of, the essentially selfish social contract. Civil society will be formed out of couples of lovers, and fathers and mothers, rather than out of atomistic individuals. It will remain derivative, but its elements will be more potent than those of more ordinary contract teachings. The goodness of sex is affirmed while the high stakes it entails are underlined. Man's dangerous responsibility is maintained but without belief in the badness of the body or original sin. Emile will be moderate because his desires are immoderate. The tutor will depict love's passion "as the supreme happiness of life, because in fact it is" (327). This is a most unusual statement for a philosopher, but a Goethe can take it as his own.

Given these high stakes and the education Emile has had, the tutor is sure that the young man, awestruck, will come begging for help in navigating these uncharted seas. He will ask the tutor to take care of him. And the tutor will use this occasion to get him to make the first promise of his life. Up to now Emile has lived according to his inclination, doing what comes naturally, and has never been asked to bind himself in such a way that duty conflicts with inclination and divides him. Now he will become divided, but on the basis of his own inner recognition that it is really for his own deepest satisfaction. This is Emile's first obligation, but the tutor will call in the chit only at the very end of *Emile*, proving thereby that morality can be truly self-legislated rather than being a merely external force put in place by others.

Of course Emile is not aware of the epoch-making importance of the contract he has just made with Jean-Jacques. When he agrees to do or to refrain from doing as his tutor commands, he does not realize that his soul will become double, divided between desire and duty. The savage lives as Emile has always lived, according to his desires. The civilized man is split between desire and what is commanded. Emile will be the first man who has true will, commanding himself. This is a loss of innocence, but it is arguably, if not demon-

strably, a higher stage of human development. Another way of putting it, which refers us back to the little boy in his garden who learns about forbidden fruit, is that unlike God, Rousseau will give commandments that his creation can understand (98–101).

Once this sacred and legal obligation is put in place, the tutor prescribes a course of action to satisfy the now urgent demands of sexual awareness. What he proposes is a modern knight errant's quest for the ideal woman who will satisfy together Emile's physical and moral demands. Prior to seeking her, Emile, alone or with the help of his tutor (the novelist), must create her in his imagination (328ff.). His tutor proposes the name Sophie for this ideal woman. When he encounters the woman who incarnates the ideal, who turns out actually to bear the name Sophie, he will experience the shock of recognition or, to put it Platonically, the reminiscence of what he already knows within himself as his own. Finally Rousseau addresses the real problem: how one cares for another as one cares for oneself rather than as an other, a leap that Emile has not yet made and that most people never make. He provides the erotic equivalent of his solution to the political problem: obedience to the law one gives oneself. One obeys oneself, not an other or others. One's self-esteem depends on one's capacity for such law giving and obedience. In love all this comes into play, now supported by a powerful inclination promising happiness.

This is Rousseau's radical teaching about love. Love is imaginary. It is not the love of the self-subsistent Idea of the beautiful, as in Plato. Nor, given the illusory character of love, does Rousseau follow Lucretius in trying to free man from the illusions of love. He weds the Lucretian view of love as illusion with the Platonic seriousness about love. "And what is true love itself if it is not chimera, lie, and illusion? We love the image we make for ourselves far more than we love the object to which we apply it" (329). The enigma of Rousseau's whole undertaking is how one can believe in what one knows to be a product of one's imagination. He teaches that imagination plays a much more important role in sex than do the physical facts. That is why the preparation of the imagination is a lifetime's work, from childhood on. He goes so far as to say that a man who lived alone on a desert island would die never having felt sexual desire. Only within society and its poetic speech do sexual desire and love bloom. By such means Rousseau attempts to overcome the radical isolation of man posited by modern thought, the fundamental principle of which he accepts.

The presence of the ideal object of desire in Emile's imagination is

a substitute for the innocence that kept him from early sexual indulgence. Now he will reject the nasty and debauched possibilities offered to him as unworthy. He will be looking at every woman who presents herself and saying, "Oh, that is not she." Thus Rousseau hopes to prolong Emile's virginity while he is still learning things necessary for the state of adulthood. This method kills two birds with one stone: it instills longing in a being used to immediate satisfactions (and shows that the capacity to long for higher fulfillments is very necessary to the fully developed human being) and enables him to learn about society close up without being corrupted by it. With his ideal, Emile will pay the closest attention to the societies into which he will enter but will have a standpoint from which to despise most of what he finds in them.

Discovering standpoints for sound judgments is the most important part of Rousseau's education. The little boy has his immediate, natural pleasures and pains unaffected by others' opinions. The merely corporeal suffices. All he needs is healthy senses, and that is why the education of the senses is so important in the first two books of *Emile*. Later, when utility supersedes pleasure and pain as the guide of his action, he has the comparison between the dinner of the rich and the noble and that of the country people which gives him perspective on luxury and the division of labor. Next, when he enters the sentimental or moral dimension of life, he has compassion, which makes him pity rather than envy the great. Now the complete and most privileged standpoint will be to judge all that he sees and experiences against the standard of *amour-passion*. By cultivating such standpoints in the soul of his educated ordinary man, Rousseau provides him with the philosopher's touchstone, which liberates him from the tyranny of opinion, or its alienation, and its sinister relativism. He concludes with an astonishing declaration:

> If there were a single man among [the youth of our day] who knew how to be temperate and sober and who knew how in their midst to preserve his heart, his blood, and his morals from the contagion of their example, at the age of thirty he would crush all these insects and become their master with less effort than he had exerted in remaining his own master!
>
> No matter how little birth and fortune had done for Emile, he would be that man if he wanted to be. But he would despise these young men too much to deign to enslave them. (335)

So much power does Rousseau attribute to nurture or education over nature that this ordinary man, properly educated, can be seen as a harbinger of Nietzsche's Superman. Here one also finds the roots of the Marxists' great expectations for socialist man. Rousseau rebels against the decisive effect of nature with its unjust distribution of capability.

Rousseau makes many interesting and sensible suggestions about how to ride the wild steeds of adolescent sexual desire while avoiding the dangers of becoming their accomplice, on the one hand, or their hated and discredited censor, on the other. In this context he condemns masturbation unequivocally (333–334). He says he would prefer that Emile frequent prostitutes rather than use this "dangerous supplement." This is a strong opinion, particularly striking since Rousseau speaks in the *Confessions* about his own use of the "dangerous supplement" in much less categorical terms.[44] The difference is that Emile unlike Rousseau is to be a social or a married man: going to a prostitute implies the need for another, whereas masturbation implies the possibility of solitariness.

The solitary man has roots in the state of nature, which must be overcome by social man. But social man is somewhat less natural for Rousseau than he makes him appear to be; therefore conventions and habits must reinforce the somewhat doubtful teleological attachment of sexual desire. Rousseau tells us that imagination is the core of sexual attachments and that he is the virtuoso of the imagination in this regard. There is a sense in which the naughty Rousseau is more the poet than is the lover because he feeds totally and freely off the imagination and actually provides the imaginary object of love for his pupil. Rousseau the philosopher-novelist attempts to provide the erotic imagination for mankind at large. This is why I say that the modern romantic disposition, initiated by Rousseau, is somehow a construction rather than a natural growth. The "dangerous supplement" is a response to the conflicting inclinations of civilized man and in Rousseau's case helps to soften the conflicts. *Emile* is an attempt simply to overcome them, but one might wonder whether it isn't just covering over them. That there is a sexual teleology is a lot less certain than Rousseau would have us believe in this aspect of his teaching. But he is still an excellent corrective for thinking about a question that is no longer a question for us—the acceptance of all forms of sexual arousal. The powerful and exclusive sexual attachment to another depends upon the habit of thinking that the object of one's affections is the sole and unique satisfaction. Otherwise one is likely to get only watery and legalistic attachments.

XI

Emile, equipped with his new standards, goes out into society to learn its ways. More precisely, Rousseau takes him to live for a year in Paris (334–344). This choice suffices to show that Rousseau does not so unequivocally despise Paris as he would have us believe. Rather, civilized and divided man produces twin peaks of accomplishment or fulfillment that are incompatible. For the ancients they were Athens and Sparta, for Rousseau in his own way, Paris and Geneva. Sparta and Geneva represent moral or civic excellence; Athens and Paris represent, if not excellence, at least a rainbow of the intellectual achievements. The purpose of the Paris sojourn is to teach the young man who has lived so much alone to live with his fellows. This is not so much for the sake of morals, for this young man is already essentially moral, although bad social ties might threaten his morality. It is to teach him to live with men as they are while maintaining his distance. Or, to put it another way, this is his education in taste, the experience of elegant pleasures that are not necessary but bespeak noble concerns. This is the arena of the gentleman as he is described by Aristotle—an arena so neglected by the modern thinkers—who likes beautiful but useless things. Such things are the objects of disinterested but passionate attachment, unalloyed by base necessity, a sign of man's freedom. Rousseau is alert to what is lost in modernity. The modern writers simplified the moral teaching of the ancients. The ancients always spoke about the good and the beautiful in their moral writings, while the moderns speak only of the good or useful. Thus the human significance of art is trivialized, reduced to entertainment. Restoring art to its throne as the expression of the soul's most sublime heights is Rousseau's intention.

Thus the incipient lover is best prepared for art. Poetry, painting, and music express the intention of love while heightening it and civilizing it. The young Emile, prior to puberty, is a perfect mirror of nature, the decent but crude product of so much democratic education—pragmatic, learning the method of the sciences as the highest achievement—whereas Rousseau, in the same way Tocqueville does after him, holds that unpoetic or unartistic democratic man lacks something of great importance that was known to aristocratic ages. Modern education concentrates on what Pascal calls *l'esprit de géométrie*,[45] whereas Rousseau proposes to bring together in one person the opposed traits of *l'esprit de géométrie* and *l'esprit de finesse*. Emile must combine the exquisite taste found in aristocracies with the decent, common general morals of healthy democratic man. Of course, Rousseau holds that good morals are the most important thing, but taste contributes much more of what makes everyday life agreeable.

The artist is a teacher of the subtle distinctions among things and corrects the tendency to scientific abstractness, providing a rich and varied natural consciousness. It is in such things that Paris excels. Although Rousseau often appears to denigrate the art world, introduction to it is the capstone of his education of Emile. Even though taste is corrupt in Paris (because the arts are objects of vanity for the rich and the powerful, and the link to healthy morality that gives art its power is broken), one can find there a subtler observation of man as well as an attachment to classic literature that is both healthy and profound. Emile will be protected from that corruption because his love goal prevents him from being caught up in the petty intrigues of the artistic and political worlds that dominate Paris.

Essential to the cultivation of taste is the relation between the two sexes. That is where even Emile is dependent on the opinions of others and therefore has a deep interest in pleasing (338, 341). And this is also where Emile's love of poetry and that of the modern Frenchman diverge. The Frenchman is only playing an artificial game promising eternity in return for enjoyment now to women who bestow their favors easily while presenting the false front of chasteness. But for the real lover, love is a life-and-death matter, and its artistic expression reflects that seriousness. Great art is sublime and sublimating. This relation of love and art parallels what Rousseau said about rhetoric—in modern, demythologized nature, force and interest dictate because there is no longer a beautiful persuasive speech. The French of Rousseau's time used an artificial and thin expression that reflected the character of their gallantry. Lovers had been struck dumb because of a loss of even the memory of great erotic passion with its great risks. Here the dull voice of calculating reason was the same as that used in accounting. Neither the grand passion nor the delicious obscenity of the great poetry was to be found. Without the words for the expression of passion, passion itself disappears. The grunt will not do. Real love requires a language to express itself. This is why Rousseau adores the Platonic dialogues about love, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, where men serious about love invent marvelous speeches.* Emile will learn gorgeous

*As always, it is the ancient Greeks who have the best taste and the greatest power in expressing the natural human emotions. As in so many other cases in *Emile*, Rousseau convincingly shows his own taste and power of discrimination in his interpretation of literary texts, be it Thucydides, Plutarch, La Fontaine, or Tasso (239; 110–111; 112–116, 248; 385, 415). He defends his restoration of ancient literature with a killing response to Fontenelle, the great proponent of the moderns in the "Battle of the Books," who said "that this whole dispute about ancients and moderns comes down to knowing whether the trees

speech without which he could not convey his sentiments to his beloved. This peak of sublimation will be put into practice as soon as Emile meets his Sophie in Book V.

As a conclusion to the sublimating education of Book IV, Rousseau again speaks about himself, not Emile. This is the third passage reflecting on the development of the tutor rather than the pupil (344–355). It is a mirror of the soul of the grown-up or fully developed Jean-Jacques and completes the trilogy that begins with his night games at the Lamberciers and passes through his encounter with the Savoyard Vicar. Now he indulges in a fantasy about what he would do with his life if he were rich, meaning if he had no need to concern himself with the deforming and unpleasant provision of the necessary. The most remarkable aspect of this fantasy is the utter absence of the indignation, the wounded *amour-propre*, at the center of his other tales about himself. He has learned to consult his own inclinations and not to sacrifice the present for hopes and fears about the future. What we get here is an essay that presents a refined epicurism in taste, a substitute for morals. The grown Jean-Jacques is oceans away from the Savoyard Vicar as well as from Emile the ardent lover.

In Rousseau's fantasy everything would be measured in terms of pleasure. As one would expect with Rousseau, the entertainments Jean-Jacques would offer to his friends take place in the country and feed off the unadorned joys of nature itself. Everybody there is somehow an isolate. They have no duties, and each will separate off when it is his inclination to do so. No one is married, it seems; there are no lovers à la Emile. It is their shared pleasure in natural entertainment that binds them together. Rousseau seems to suggest that, for a man like himself, with his doubts and his independence, something like this is the best solution of the tension between nature and civilization. This is a side of Rousseau that does not figure in Kant and leads toward *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*.

This fantasy belongs to a middle-aged man, and the sexual life treated in it is appropriate to that age. Rousseau knows that it is unseemly for a graybeard to pursue the nymphs who might people his forest. This is not because he no longer feels desire but because the desire would not be reciprocated. He would be a ridiculous figure, if he forgot, as most men do, how unseemly the coupling of

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in the past were bigger than those today," and to whom Rousseau rejoins, "If agriculture had changed, it would not be impertinent to ask this question" (343). Education is the agriculture of the human soul, and Rousseau's education seems to want the improbable synthesis of modern natural science with ancient human wisdom. This importance of taste for human existence is reflected in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*.

youth and age is. There are no moral considerations here, as there are for the Vicar. It is simply not fitting for a man to live off illusions and be a disgusting sight to the object of his desires and to the world at large. He does not renounce sex, but for the sake of his own self-awareness, he will not take it seriously. This is part of good taste and shows how good taste can supplement or substitute for morality. Purchased love is best not taken seriously, particularly not by the purchaser. As the Savoyard Vicar presents otherworldly overcoming of the body's lusts, Rousseau presents himself as the practitioner of a worldly overcoming. Whether this solution is preferable to Emile's passionate, moralizing love is a question. In any event, Rousseau has presented us with the materials for putting together the puzzle of the alienated man's struggle with his own dividedness, as opposed to his pupil's simple sincerity, which has never had to cope with the corruptions of dividedness.

XII

Once Emile completes his junior year abroad in Paris, his judgment has been formed while he has developed an immunity to the big city's glitter. Now he and his friend leave Paris without regret to look for Sophie in less civilized or more rustic places. This is the climax of Emile's education, which finally determines the course of his whole life.

Emile as a whole is a novel and within this novel there is a second novel, a romantic novel, Book V, where the bourgeois knight-errant finds his lady, courts her, and wins her. Here Rousseau gives an outline of the themes that must be treated by novelists if they wish to interest the heart of modern man. With *Emile* Rousseau founded a whole genre of novels called the *Bildungsroman*, or education novel, the most notable example of which is Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. And Rousseau succeeded in imposing his taste on many of the greatest writers of the nineteenth century, who constitute the core of the classic tradition of the novel. There followed a century-long elaboration of the delicate psychology of men and women in love, the most appropriate discourse for modern man.

Rousseau says, "It is not good for man to be alone" (357). So did God. Rousseau tells us critically that Locke just brings his pupil together with his mistress and leaves it at that. Again, so did God. Neither gave man or woman the education necessary to overcome their loneliness in marriage. That is a much greater task.

Here I encounter the greatest difficulty facing anyone who dares to speak of these questions in our age. There is a powerful orthodoxy today that limits the kind of speech possible about the nature of woman and about the nature of man in relation to woman. This orthodoxy has its roots partly in the egalitarian principles of democratic regimes. Such regimes do not admit the existence of decisive differences of nature but rather insist that all human beings are essentially the same and reject any political conclusions drawn from whatever differences there may actually be. This orthodoxy is reinforced in our own time by radical feminism, which is something more potent and more extreme than the teachings of traditional egalitarianism. Poor Jean-Jacques, who suffered during his lifetime at the hands of outraged piety, now suffers something similar at the hands of outraged feminism. He is considered to be one of the great sexists and a source of the oppression of women. Some persons don't want him to be read, even though his radical egalitarianism and his initiation of the movement in favor of participatory democracy make him appealing in other respects. Mostly, as is the case with much of our past, he is simply ignored; but if he is discussed, it goes without saying that it is only to diagnose and dismiss his wrongheadedness.

It is my view that what is held most passionately at a given moment is that which most needs criticism from persons, places, and times at a distance from the current convictions. It is always dangerous to be such a critic or to seek out those who are, and that is why philosophy is perpetually a risky undertaking. There are a number of ways to arrange the relations between men and women, in sex and love, in marriage and in parenthood, ranging from the harem depicted in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* to the virtual disappearance of the difference between the sexes in Plato's *Republic*. There is no reason to assume that the arrangement we opt for is the only one or the best. These differences seem to be rooted in "cultures" and one must either leave it at cultural relativism and say that these are simply different ways, or attempt with an open mind to determine which culture is best and most enhances the human beings who belong to it. Neither of these stances justifies the atmosphere of indignation and recrimination prevalent today. With resignation I face the fact that I shall lose much of my audience by taking Rousseau seriously and keeping open the possibility that he may understand these things as well as or better than we do. I could mumble that I am only reporting Rousseau's opinions and that I do not wholly share them, which is true, but such an apology is already too much of a concession to the mere power of the present. These are important questions

and, as is always the case, we shall have need of deeply thought through alternatives when the prevailing orthodoxy wears thin. I could not, however, in good conscience prescribe such a course to a young professor who does not yet have tenure.

It must be admitted that this little Romantic novel in Book V presents peculiar difficulties. We must understand that his florid rhetoric is meant to provoke the coquettish Parisian ladies who kept the salons where elderly philosophers turned their thought to pleasing them and made themselves ridiculous. And the novel's Romantic taste with its idealization of woman is far from the taste of generations formed by the hard-headed reaction to Rousseau. We have moved from sentimentality to brutality, and it is our peculiar perversion to believe that the brutal is more authentic than the sentimental. Moreover, we are so much further on the road to the equality of women that we fail to recognize how radical Rousseau's proposals were.

The strong reaction to Rousseau today is in large measure on target, for, although he evinces the most sacred respect for women, he argues strongly against the possibility of the total transformation of "gender relations" and deplores the hostility toward, or even the denial of, what he calls the law of nature in sexual relations (358). Yet, Rousseau uses the notions of nature and natural ambiguously (consciously so). Here he is somewhere between nature in the rigorous sense, as depicted in *The Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality*, and merely edifying public doctrine. Rousseau at this point takes the family to be natural, while in the real state of nature neither men nor women have families. This is confusing, and one must interpret him to mean that in the passage from nature to society, the family, on natural grounds, becomes necessary to minister to the more complicated needs of children in society. This is natural only in the sense that nature constrains man's freedom in such a way as to restrict the satisfactory nonnatural or civilized solution to the problems of producing and educating offspring. Actually, what is presented in Book V is closer to what one ought to call culture than nature, with the difference being that culture is not simply a free creation accomplishing what it wants with unlimitedly plastic man, but a creation precisely limited, if not determined, by nature.

Rousseau's presentation here is a project, something that he makes up, and is therefore not compelling in the same way nature is. But his project bows toward nature and attempts to preserve in civilized fashion the inclinations found in nature. Here he is at odds with modern persons like Simone de Beauvoir and her particular brand of Existentialism that is so appealing to many Americans.

Rousseau was very much aware of the almost inevitable collapse of the differences between the sexes resulting from liberal society and the principle of equality that informs it, so what he says can be practically understood to be a response to what is going on today. In general, the thinkers of the past saw pretty much what we see in erotic matters and, to put it boldly but truly, no serious thinker ever regarded women as slaves. The charge that they did is a piece of demagoguery to which we have become far too used. At least since Aristotle, the truest principle of feminism has been asserted by everyone: the hallmark of barbarism is treating women as slaves.[46] But unlike earlier thinkers Rousseau shares our situation. He was the first critic of liberalism or bourgeois society and was so prescient that he saw from the beginning what others began to see only a century later. Marx owes to Rousseau the things he said in the *Communist Manifesto* and elsewhere about the homogenization of men and women produced by bourgeois society.

The special problem to which Rousseau addresses himself is the atomization and egotism produced by modern bourgeois society. Rousseau is as great an egalitarian as either Hobbes or Locke, if not more so. But if selfish natural man is translated as is into society, the only human relations possible are founded on selfish individualism; and the original egotism, which in nature was self-sufficient, becomes complicated by the need to use other human beings as means to our ends. The decay in human connectedness is a problem of which we are only too aware across the political spectrum, from right to left. Even those who are most eager to transform the relations between men and women also deplore modern isolation and uprootedness, which they regard as the results of bourgeois society's and capitalism's tendency to use human beings as commodities rather than as ends in themselves. All of these lamentations are not, however, accompanied by persuasive remedies, because we also are unwilling to give up the individual independence that is at the root of the problem. Older, more organic communities were based on forcing men and women into a social mold, partly by use of traditions or untrue myths. Now we see through them. Modern democratic man has to have arguments that are rational and compelling to his individual judgment and to which he can give his assent or dissent. Rousseau, just as he passionately wishes to remain faithful to equality, also insists on freedom, and these conditions define the problem he sets out to solve. Therefore one must seek a powerful and nonmercenary motive for relations among human beings that can be affirmed by free and equal persons. Rousseau is able to find only love and family feeling which

might be compelling to such persons. There is something natural about family relations, and Rousseau makes a great effort to make them appear totally natural. Nature, in spite of all the critical philosophical objections to the very idea, is still compelling to common sense. "It's only natural" always seems to be a justification that is not merely ancestral or mythical and which is hence persuasive.

People who are in love present a visible disproof of the selfish economic model of man. The kind of attachments possible in the family and that flow from love can be reduced to individuals' selfish calculations only by sophistic arguments. A people made up of families is selfish in an entirely different way from one made up of individuals. It is imperative for Rousseau to discover a molecule out of which to build society rather than the atoms out of which it is today built. The parts of the molecule are already moved by different kinds of motives founded in real attachments and concern for others. Rousseau attempts on modern grounds to reconstitute the family as the prepolitical unit out of which civil society is constructed. He is far too modern to argue, as did the ancients, that one must begin with politics because man is naturally a political animal. The parts precede the whole and the high must be constituted out of, or reduced to, the low. This is the modern difficulty, which Rousseau faces squarely, although one can always wonder whether its solution is possible. Instead Rousseau makes a powerful case for the centrality of the sexual passion and its connectedness with other persons. The differentiation of the sexes opens the possibility for the social differentiation in which human beings are not simply individuals. Rousseau tries to prove the complementarity of man and woman. If man and woman are a pair and unable to be complete without each other, contributing equal but different shares in a common work, then one can speak plausibly of a certain natural sociality; whereas if they are all the same or whatever they want to be, we are back to the war of all against all. Rousseau is aware that mere exhortation or legal arrangement will not succeed in producing genuine commonality if there is not natural inclination to support it. He affronts contemporary convictions with arguments about nature that attribute to it a teleology that is at least doubtful.

He begins by treating human beings, on the analogy of the plant and animal kingdoms, as instruments of reproduction, as though they have one supreme function or work and must be interpreted with respect to it. A certain scientific objectivity would seem to confirm the soundness of this beginning, but it shocks the sacred sense of individual freedom, and it does not jibe with the subjective sense of in-

dividuals who frequently need sex and enjoy it, without any thought of the eternity in children, let alone fulfilling the responsibilities connected with them. Rousseau appears to argue that our being or our natures will be unfulfilled unless the natural function becomes the subjective goal of civilized man. He thinks, or wants us to think, that a man as father and a woman as mother are clearly more deeply human than persons with careers in the modern marketplace. But his rhetoric about love and family, profoundly moving to men and women of the nineteenth century, no longer seems so to us today.

He begins his treatment of love by stating certain undeniably natural facts that he admits are not the "law of love" but that underlie love. The bodily performance of the sexual act requires different things from the two sexes. A man must have an erection, and it is up to woman to provide the attractions necessary to produce one if she wishes to engage in sex with him. He must will and be able, whereas she must simply not put up too much resistance. It follows, according to Rousseau, that for the sexual union to succeed, woman must make herself charming or agreeable to man. "The surest art for animating [a man's] strength is to make it necessary by resistance. Then *amour-propre* unites with desire, and the one triumphs in the victory that the other has made him win" (358). Attachment requires not only one's own desire but the uncertainty of whether one is really desired by another. This is the beginning of all the complexity of erotic artifice. One must doubt, the other must feign, all in the name of a successful outcome that both desire. The male doubt about the seriousness of female resistance and the consequent testing of the finality of refusal, which so infuriate some of our contemporaries and are taken to be assaults on women leading to date rape, are an essential part of the game of love according to Rousseau. He of course is unequivocally opposed to any real forcing of a woman to do a man's will. But discerning the difference between a woman's modesty and her actual distaste is the core of an essential delicacy that must be learned. There are risks in this game but the partners must learn to play it if they are to have a real engagement of their souls. Man is the victor in a gentle combat with someone who appears to favor him exclusively. He can be moved by the discreet mixing of his sexual desire and his *amour-propre*, and modesty is the magnet that draws him. Rousseau gives two reasons for this: first, that female modesty is attractive to men, and second, that a woman's stakes in the sexual act are much greater because she alone can become pregnant. The first reason has to do simply with the pleasures of making love, the second with the protection of children (359ff.). One may well doubt whether feminine modesty represents a

natural harmony between the requirements of sexual pleasure and those of child raising. The two reasons can be joined, however, by asserting, as does Rousseau, that it is up to the woman to attract the man to herself and by extension to the children because of her interest in getting someone to protect and provide for them. Rousseau thus outlines the key role of woman in providing the link between father and children, which is not provided by instinct. It is a woman's heavy burden to turn the man into a lover and give him a second nature, a love of his children.

A third reason for modesty is that women have more powerful and constant sexual inclinations than do men. They can perform many times what men can do less often. And they do not, like the brutes, have seasons. With an unabashedly teleological formula, Rousseau says that modesty is nature's gift to the human female which guides the freedom she has and the brutes do not. Women would, in a shameless state, exhaust men. Modesty, therefore, perhaps a little too much like a *deus ex machina*, both limits women and makes them more attractive, apparently subservient to men while actually enslaving them. There is no doubt that Rousseau gives to women the highest respect as well as the leading role. What is intolerable to many American women (although not so many French women) is that the female must exercise her talents in that role in relation to male nature. There is no insurance that the male will always enter properly into the system, but it is the most thoughtfully considered account of how to get the unattached male to care.

The naturalist looks to the end or final cause of these two disparate but related beings—the reproduction of the species. The male is ordinarily stronger than the female and is free from the handicaps that limit a woman during pregnancy. Therefore, the proper division of labor for men and women who are no longer solitaries in the state of nature is for the woman to care for her children and for herself while the man seeks sustenance for all and protects the woman. Man's strength and woman's softness combine perfectly to constitute the family. Moreover, Rousseau further deduces a different psychology for male and female, distinct but complementary, along with separate but equal talents contributing to the common good. On the basis of the merely bodily differences between man and woman Rousseau establishes a whole way of life for each. He fits together the pieces of a puzzle that when completed presents the picture of the happy family.

Yet despite a certain commonsense plausibility, one cannot help wondering whether he is not forcing the pieces of the puzzle rather than finding them cut out by nature herself. One must always bear

in mind that Rousseau is speaking about ordinary people, not the prodigies of art, science, or politics, who cannot be included in a system of democratic education and who must make do for themselves. The parties to the family way of life must agree about the primacy of the family. Rousseau tries to persuade women of that primacy and leaves women to use their charms and talents to persuade men. He insists that the one who appears the weaker in this pair is really the ruler. The essential mechanism she sets in motion is *amour-propre*. Even the most independent-minded erotic man becomes dependent on the judgment of a woman, and a serious woman, one who is looking not only for an attractive man but for one who will love her and protect her, may be the best possible judge of a man's virtues and thus be regarded even by the most serious man as the supreme tribunal of his worth (360, 390–391).

The woman is the first to give evidence of will. Emile has never had to use one part of his soul to control or repress another part, so he can be understood to be an undivided desiring being, even though his desires are gradually sublimated by his education. The woman must from the very beginning desire, but control and dissimulate her desire. The character of the relations between man and woman is determined by the way in which he understands the meaning of her resistance to him. If he believes that her resistance is meant as a test of his virtue and her ceding to him is possible only if he himself is good, then he will endeavor to be or to appear good. But if he believes that a woman's resistance is mere coquetry, that her no always means yes, and that she merely uses the social forms to make herself attractive, he will enter into the game and become a flatterer. In this way, women can be said to determine the character of men in society. Thus, Rousseau draws a sharp distinction between sexual desire that includes the recognition and love of virtue and sexual desire that is for fun and vanity. He may sound to some like a Protestant divine, but his forceful rhetoric is based on the commonsense reason that the goodness or badness of a life is largely determined by the way in which sexual desire fits into the whole economy of the soul.

The power of *Les Liaisons dangereuses* depends upon the recognition of this gravity of sexual behavior. What makes this book so diabolical is that the Marquise de Merteuil and the Vicomte de Valmont have learned the mechanisms of sexual psychology and are able to fool not only innocents but worse, virtue itself. Thus Laclos presupposes Rousseau, whereas contemporaries, who separate the way a person uses sex from his or her character, miss the point. It is possible, as we frequently do, not to pay attention to the natural necessities

connected with sexual differentiation and to go ahead and live for other things. But Rousseau would argue that the richness and profundity of life is thereby lost. Nature resides in the first sentiments and provides the link to the general or the common that is only an artificial contract, potent and useful only when it rests on the natural base. In this context, he attacks his admired Plato, who in the *Republic* treats the sexual organs and the facts of procreation as unimportant accidents and uses women exactly as he does men, as artisans, as warriors, as rulers, and even as philosophers. Rousseau responds,

> . . . [this] cannot fail to engender the most intolerable abuses. I speak of that subversion of the sweetest sentiments of nature, sacrificed to an artificial sentiment which can only be maintained by them—as though there were no need for a natural base on which to form conventional ties; as though the love of one's nearest were not the principle of the love one owes the state; as though it were not by means of the small fatherland which is the family that the heart attaches itself to the large one; as though it were not the good son, the good husband, and the good father who make the good citizen! (363)

In strange ways, although we are far from Plato today, we are Platonists, in minimizing the implication of sexual differences. Rousseau has the merit for us of rigorously following through this sexual logic to its end and with all of its consequences. In so doing he makes women into terrestrial goddesses, the worship of whom makes men virtuous. Even though one recognizes all of the differences, one cannot help being reminded of the cult of the Virgin. Of course, these women are not to be virgins.

The most unpalatable immediate consequence of Rousseau's reasoning is a reaffirmation of the deplorable old double standard on new grounds. A woman's fidelity is more important than a man's because of her risk of pregnancy. It is essential, Rousseau affirms, that the man believe that the child is his own. This belief has a great deal to do with transforming his sexual desire into a permanent attachment. The irrational, fierce love of one's own, founded in *amour-propre*, is the glue that seals the parts together. It is easy enough to criticize male distrust and jealousy, but, Rousseau responds, what substitute can you find? A man must see in his child his own product and the possibility of his immortality by way of it. These are hard motives for us to credit, but one could say that their attenuation robs the soul of vigorous although dangerous forces,

giving selfish individualizing reason greater sway. Polite people today prefer not to talk about such things, and their sense of justice prompts them to say that they would love children equally, no matter what their origins. Yet one must wonder whether this is a progress in morals or an easygoing rationalization for a growing indifference reflected in the collapse of the family. Attenuating a male's concern for children *as his own* does not result in broader attachments but shallower ones: he abandons his own children more readily. Rousseau gives great weight to these terrible but also possibly sublime passions to which natural man was totally indifferent, as he was to the children who might have resulted from his casual encounters with females.

Whole categories of literature, both tragic and comic, turned on this question of a child's legitimacy, but none of it means much any longer now that the legitimacy of the child is no longer so powerful a concern. For Rousseau, it is decisive. Rousseau of course deplores male infidelity, and thinks it deserves harsh treatment, but nevertheless insists on greater rigors for the female. This means that a woman is from the outset attached to opinion in a way and to a degree that do not exist for a man. A woman must not only be virtuous but be thought to be virtuous by her husband and the world. Thus women are naturally more conventional than men. The secret of Sophie's education is to restore her spiritual independence while she is mindful of the opinions of men. To live happily in this condition she will have to find an Emile.

The progress of the arts and sciences has contributed since Rousseau's time to a partial repeal of the law of nature, particularly by way of medicine. The invention of the Pill has made it possible for women to have sex without fear of pregnancy. The increase in life expectancy means that a smaller portion of life is devoted to the preservation of the species in the rearing of children. And in the last fifty years, infant mortality from disease has practically disappeared in advanced countries. Till only yesterday, one of the saddest aspects of human life was that a quarter to a half of children died before reaching maturity, so that the parents' fond gaze was always mixed with the anticipation of loss, and a large number of children had to be produced to ensure the perpetuation of the family.

As a result women can more easily enter the labor force and compete in the liberating or corrupting capitalist marketplace. Rousseau would surely have to recognize that there is an important difference in this respect between our times and all other times, and this difference has a profound effect on how women must and can live.

And this calls into question the alleged permanence of the human problems, which was the premise of all political philosophers up until the nineteenth century and the advent of historicism. Rousseau's response to the historicist assertion of the uniqueness of every human situation is in this case simple. There are indeed new freedoms and new possibilities opened up by the advance of medical science promised by Descartes in that famous fund-raising brochure, *The Discourse on Method*. However, we now recognize what Rousseau was the first to insist on more than two centuries ago, that the progress of science and the conquest of nature are not simply unproblematic. Our new freedoms depend on that new science, and Rousseau would tell us that these freedoms now dear to us are bought at a high price, above all the demystification of the world and the uprooting of man from it.

Rousseau gives us guidance by his response to the first great medical advance that saved the lives of children, vaccination. This whole issue was fraught with grave political consequences. The thinkers of the Enlightenment were enthusiastically and unqualifiedly for vaccination; the Catholic church, as well as other churches, was against it. Voltaire acted as a publicist for this English discovery in his *Philosophical Letters*.[47] Yet Rousseau again tries to walk in a middle space that neither side wished to accord him. Of course his heart goes out to the children who die, and in each particular case he undoubtedly would have authorized any means to save them. But he does not have Emile vaccinated—because vaccination presupposes the existence of a scientific community that is possible only in large, luxurious, and corrupt nations, and because the world in which doctors are prominent is the one where living becomes more important than living well (131). In this Rousseau follows Plato in the *Republic*.[48] In opposing vaccination he seems to be joining the Kingdom of Darkness, but he was not a welcome guest there either, for his reasons were not religious ones but natural. Rousseau contents himself with a jibe at the Encyclopedists' easygoing self-satisfaction and resolves the rhetorical problem by asserting that contemporary man in already corrupt societies must be vaccinated, thus giving his support to the rational practice of medicine, but he makes it clear at the same time that the quantity of lives saved may be achieved at the cost of their quality. There is little doubt that he would have been even more doubtful about the desirability of the Pill, which by divorcing sex from procreation and the family that gave it meaning liberates men and women from great and noble responsibilities without providing anything to take their place. And as to women in the labor market, his poetic ex-

hortations to family life, which were so moving to many women in his time and after, give us an indication of how he would react. To all of these things his simple response is, "Sure you can make these changes, but the price will be the collapse of the family, and this proves that the human problems are permanent." Nature does not allow costless progress. The great and accidental changes in man that occur on the way from the state of nature to society put Rousseau on the brink of asserting the unlimited plasticity of man alleged in the generations after Rousseau by historicists, but the iron necessity of nature still remains underneath all the changes as Rousseau saw them. The problems of love are pretty much what they always were.

Thus, in Rousseau's teaching a man is always a man and a woman is always a woman, and the well-integrated personality must refer all of its elements to that basic nature. Ultimately, in Romanticism, the distinction between male and female is much more unambiguous than one finds in earlier literature. In Shakespeare, for example, things are often complicated by role reversals and the presence of a combination of male and female elements in a single person, so that a perfect fit of male and female is more difficult to imagine. As a preliminary and very tentative reproach to Rousseau and the movement to which he gave the first impulse, one might say that he presents in all seriousness what Aristophanes presents half jokingly and in a most qualified way, that is, that love is the quest for one's other half, which once found, restores the lovers to perfect wholeness. There is no war between the sexes here, and each desires the other for the sake of wholeness. This might be a subtle and delicate simplification of human nature in the name of real community.

XIII

After having established the interdependent directedness of male and female and the complex psychology of attack and defense, forwardness and modesty natural to male and female, Rousseau turns to the education of the female (364–393). It is not too surprising that this treatment is both much shorter and much more conventional than that given to Emile. Woman, as Rousseau has already observed, is necessarily more dependent, and this education is intended to provide her with independence in the search for a man on whom she can depend and who will sacrifice his independence to become her willing slave. As in "The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar," Rousseau begins closer to the social state

than to the state of nature where he begins Emile's education. All kinds of traits, like conscience and modesty, are taken to be simply natural rather than modifications of nature.

The general tendency of this simple education is to see to it that a girl's taste for pleasing men be to please virtuous men rather than gallant ones, that her desire include ideals of merit as well as those of physical perfection. This is where the great divide between romance and sex is located. The woman's education is something of a blank slate waiting to be filled in by husband and wife together. Not too surprisingly, Rousseau accepts observations about little girls' natural tastes characteristically made by parents, observations frequently contested by critics who say that they are merely responses to the expectations of parents. Little girls, Rousseau asserts, are interested in being attractive and adorning themselves, whereas little boys want only to be independent. Thus the cultivation of the pleasing arts is a good beginning for a girl as the planting of beans was for a boy, a nonabstract beginning point that engages the child's enthusiasm while teaching useful things. Unlike the education of Emile, Sophie's education will be entrusted to her parents. No new beginning here, although this can in part be explained by the fact that fathers no longer educated their sons and in practice really left them to their mothers, who coddled and protected them overmuch, whereas mothers can appropriately educate their daughters and teach them what it means to be a woman. They are made companions of their mothers. Singing, dancing, sewing, penmanship, and so on are the things young girls practice. Rousseau, it must be remembered, wants to combine a traditional strength of soul directed to chasteness with a full, if exclusive, earthy sexual expression. Therefore he in no way reproves apparently natural coquetry, including dancing and singing, the kinds of things reproved by his Calvinist forbears. It seems that a wife must to the outside world have the austerity of a nun, and inside the home create the sensual atmosphere of the harem. Unlike Emile, Sophie is constrained constantly to change her objects of attention, as she will be when she is a mother burdened with household responsibilities and various kinds of care of her children (368–369). Hers will be a life more toilsome and less unified in its activities than her husband's.

This toilsome life in relation to the two poles, children and husband, is understood by Rousseau not as subjugation but rather as assuring the exercise of women's real strength and influence. A respectable and charming woman is the great civilizer. Women, Rousseau says, are as intelligent as men, and their intelligence is more

precocious. But the intelligences of men and women differ. Men are more abstract and speculative, looking to general rules. Women are more practical and more interested in the particular cases of their children, their husbands, and even of public opinion, which is so important for them. Given the status of the customs concerning inheritance in Rousseau's time, they must even worry about their children's goodwill if they are to have the wherewithal to live as widows. They are better psychologists, partly because they have to pay a great deal of attention to those on whom they depend. Rousseau gives splendidly amusing accounts of the superiority of female address, for example, the embarrassment of a man seated at dinner between two women with each of whom he is having an affair compared with a woman's capacity to manipulate such a situation so as to persuade each of her lovers that he is the preferred one (384–385). This kind of concern with others' opinions was what was most studiously avoided in Emile's education, but for a woman it is necessary, and Rousseau attempts to compensate for it by preparing her primary attachment to a husband who is independent and will protect her. In return she will make him alert to the delicacies of human relationships to which he will respond for her sake. This is the core of the complementarity of male and female, a division of intellectual labor without which there will be no sound product. Rousseau exploits the dangerous desire of women to please in order to further their education in the useful arts as well as their improvement in morals.

This he makes undangerous by subordinating the delicate art of manipulation at which women can be so adept to their desire to have children who love them and whom they love. This manipulativeness, which would be culpable in a man, has its root in the natural necessity for deception in the game of love. This interweaving of male and female is illustrated in the culminating passage of the section on female education by the performance of a husband and wife at yet another of the dinners Rousseau lays on so frequently in *Emile*. The husband is adept at engaging people in conversation because he knows their general social situations and their interests. The wife senses their individual private feelings and their wishes, bodily and intellectual, and what they most need to be fully comfortable. The most delicious moment for the couple occurs after the guests have left, when they are able to compare notes and get a picture of their guests that neither could arrive at without the other (383–384).

> The social relationship of the sexes is an admirable thing. This partnership produces a moral person of which the woman is

> the eye and the man is the arm, but they have such a dependence on one another that the woman learns from the man what must be seen and the man learns from the woman what must be done. If woman could ascend to general principles as well as man can, and if man had as good a mind for details as woman does, they would always be independent of one another, they would live in eternal discord, and their partnership could not exist. But in the harmony which reigns between them, everything tends to the common end; they do not know who contributes more. Each follows the prompting of the other; each obeys, and both are masters. (377)

This sums up Rousseau's project of constituting a subpolitical social molecule out of the individual atoms as the stuff of society, that is, the relation of lovers who are to be procreators of citizens. This notion was picked up by Tocqueville, who describes the American family as though it were the embodiment of Rousseau's family ideal and then crowns American women as the true cause of the success of the American nation.[49] But Tocqueville, with greater modesty than Rousseau, does not give an account of the sexual relations at the base of all of this.

Nothing could underline so clearly the difference between the male and the female educations, and the different natures to which they are directed, as the different religious teachings imparted to each. Emile learned about the first principles of all things and the causes of the movements of nature. Sophie's religion is based on the idea of generation, the birth and death of children and parents, gradually stretching back to the beginning, the ones at the beginning not generated but generating, and forward to the generators who will no longer generate. Generation is the woman's miracle and inclines her to belief in a God who presides over it. This teaching would not be persuasive to a man but, kept within proper bounds, for a woman it kills many birds with one stone. It prepares a woman for the necessary adaptation to her husband's religion, essential for marriage, because its only content has to do with reverence toward the generative aspect of marriage. And it limits a woman's theological imagination to this world and her own most important duty as mother of children here and now. Rousseau finds a greater tendency to religious fanaticism in women than in men, due not only to women's lesser gifts at theoretical reason, but also to their greater dependence on fortune. They are lovers of ephemeral men and children rather than of unchanging and permanent abstractions, and they

have greater need of support and consolation in their toilsome lives. Again Rousseau insists both on the importance of religious faith and on the necessity of keeping that faith within the confines of tolerance. Here he stresses the key role of women both for piety and for its abuses (377–382).

This completes the simple education of women, the chief goal of which is to weave together two apparently contrary springs that, in concert, set the perfect female machinery in motion: the desire to please, which attaches women to the caprices of popular prejudice, and conscience, which makes them fanatic and antisocial. Conscience by itself is harsh and unadorned by the pleasant crown of worldly rewards; attention to opinion is the cause of coquetry and dishonesty under an appearance of virtue. The principles of a woman's conscience, on the basis of which her superior capacity to reason from ends to means is founded, are identical to her primitive instincts about her duties to her husband and children. She can and will artfully use her faculty to please people in general, and particularly men, within the limits of these ends.

Rousseau concludes this discussion with an impassioned quasi-sermon about the universal acclaim at all times and places for a virtuous woman. He almost makes one forget that the power of women to lift up men and society as a whole is founded on a great effort of will and reason by which their natural sexual inclination is abandoned in favor of the love of virtue. It is this effort that makes a good woman admired. A woman must forget the difference between sexual desire and eros for the noble, on the one hand, and that between the passionate love of a man and a woman and the responsibilities for a family, on the other.

> I shall say more, and I maintain that virtue is no less favorable to love than to the other rights of nature, and that the authority of the beloved gains no less from virtue than does the authority of wives and mothers. There is no true love without enthusiasm, and no enthusiasm without an object of perfection, real or chimerical, but always existing in the imagination. What will enflame lovers for whom this perfection no longer exists and who see in what they love only the object of sensual pleasure? No, it is not thus that the soul is warmed and delivered to those sublime transports which constitute the delirium of lovers and the charm of their passion. In love everything is only illusion. I admit it. But what is real are the sentiments for the truly beautiful with which love animates us

> and which it makes us love. This beauty is not in the object one loves; it is the work of our errors. So, what of it? Does the lover any the less sacrifice all of his low sentiments to this imaginary model? Does he any the less suffuse his heart with the virtues he attributes to what he holds dear? Does he detach himself any the less from the baseness of the human *I*? Where is the true lover who is not ready to immolate himself for his beloved, and where is the sensual and coarse passion in a man who is willing to die? We make fun of the paladins. That is because they knew love, and we no longer know anything but debauchery. When these romantic maxims began to become ridiculous, the change was less the work of reason than of bad morals. (391)

No more explicit a statement of the necessity of illusion for sublime states of soul could be imagined, nor could we find a better place to ask ourselves, "What is the future of an illusion that one knows to be an illusion?" This is perhaps where the poet who loves and believes in his creation overturns the tribunal of philosophy and reason. From here on out men and women are exhorted to put all their eggs in the basket of romantic love, superseding all the exploded old charms that used to be found in religion and country. Rousseau left us with an either/or pitting poetry against philosophy.

It is well to note that this romantic love is entirely reciprocal love: the lover is also beloved, and the beloved is also lover. The classic distinction between lover and beloved, a distinction which teaches that true love need not be reciprocal, is overcome. Man does not love the lovable that cannot or will not love in return. Romantic love flatters our greatest hopes and pretensions not only to love the beautiful but to be loved by it. Rousseau restores imagination, exiled by Enlightenment, to the throne of an imperium more absolute than it ever had been.

XIV

To douse the flames of enthusiasm with which Rousseau sometimes can inspire us, I recall the remark of a witty man who asked, "How did a word that used to mean the manliness of man come to signify the chastity of woman?" Rousseau plays some part in this, and when the chastity of women began to appear ridiculous, virtue became a word without a content. However

that may be, Sophie is to be the keystone of morality's arch. Women are more necessarily divided than are men because the tension between their sexual inclination, which Rousseau believes to be stronger and more continuous than that of men, and the responsibilities connected with children, is present in their bodies from the outset. The sublimated male is seeking love; the female is seeking love and the family, and the two, although they can become one, are not necessarily the same. Desire has to be controlled in the woman, and the idea of virtue—meaning a willed self-restraint—is present in her from the outset of life. The study of women, therefore, especially requires reflection on the problem of will. Natural man has no will, or, to put it otherwise, he wills his inclination or what he desires. Emile still remains in this condition, whereas Sophie is suffused with the sense of the risk she is running and in awe of the self-overcoming required of her. She can only hope that her senses will not fool her and that she will find a man whose nature and education will give her the opportunity to teach him how to will. A well-educated man will not have a problem of subordinating his desire for food or drink to his nobler desires. But he may very well have great difficulty in subordinating his sexual desire to his manifest duties. This is especially so inasmuch as Rousseau encourages and rests his teaching on the centrality of sexual desire in the souls of human beings. One must desire in order to will. The merely vital desires have been regulated in Emile by the higher desires. His preference for attractive women over good food is not an act of the will. It is merely the substitution of a more powerful desire for others. The view of modern political philosophy was that only desire controls desire, and that will, which traditionally was the source of virtue, is both ineffective and virtually nonexistent. Rousseau does not want to leave it at that, because it is ignoble and a denial of human freedom. The nobility of man consists in willing, even though the will is not natural. In a sense *Emile* is a study of the construction of the will in a being who does not naturally possess will. Dividedness is necessary to man in spite of Rousseau's explicit effort to avoid it. The crucial difference between Rousseau and the received understanding is that this dividedness is self-imposed and not imposed by the great outsiders—God, nature, or public opinion. Sophie's love of virtue is a successful use of the will. Her awareness that her bodily desires here and now are double, to satisfy her individual senses and to continue the species, gives her immediate sentiments on the basis of which she can guide herself. This is the core of her conscience, whereas Emile has no such immediate principle within him. Conscience in a woman

requires no questionable religious support, whereas the Savoyard Vicar had to offer a whole system of argument to which Jean-Jacques found "a multitude of objections" (294), stifled only by the Orpheus-like charm of the Vicar's discourse. The woman whose virtue is the crown of her charms can send "her lovers with a nod to the end of the world, to combat, to glory, to death, to anything she pleases" (393). Her virtue can create virtue in men.

At last Rousseau introduces us to Sophie, the object of the hero's quest. She is presented to us in a passage the paragraphs of which begin with "Sophie is . . ." or "Sophie is not . . ." (393–399), thus outlining her salient qualities, which are, like good taste, according to Rousseau, only a compilation of very ordinary qualities, approved by common sense, but which are very rarely combined.

> Sophie is well born;* she has a good nature; she has a very sensitive heart, and this extreme sensitivity sometimes makes her imagination so active that it is difficult to moderate. Her mind is less exact than penetrating; her disposition is easy but nevertheless uneven; her face is ordinary but agreeable; her expression gives promise of a soul and does not lie. One can approach her with indifference but not leave her without emotion. Some have good qualities that are lacking to her; others have a greater measure of those good qualities she does possess; but none has a better combination of qualities for making a favorable character. She knows how to take advantage even of her defects, and if she were more perfect, she would be much less pleasing. (393)

"Sophie is not beautiful," but she is far from ugly. A Helen of Troy is both dangerous and in the long run boring. Yet good looks are essential to the erotic, which still is the foundation of the tower Rousseau is building. Rousseau, for all his tenderness, accepts nature's faulty distribution of its gifts and reminds us that love is the domain of the young and attractive no matter how much we may wish it to be otherwise. "Sophie loves adornment," but the adornment is only an enhancement of the naked body underneath it, rather than a cosmetic dissimulation of it. The sagging structure of a middle-aged woman is for Rousseau rendered ridiculous by all the machinery invented by women in order to trick their gallants. "So-

*This is not entirely a social prejudice, inasmuch as it implies that the parents who raised her are both decent and educated.

phie has natural talents," but her dancing and her music and all the other cultivations of these natural talents are not carried to a point of perfection; that would cause her to forget their use as contributions to the grace of life. "What Sophie knows best and has been most carefully made to learn are the labors of her own sex," which make her able to supervise a household and its servants, like the wives described in the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Cooking, sewing, household accounts, etc., will enable her to govern her household and, more important, the man who will be its putative master. She tends to be somewhat obsessed with cleanliness, a vice not usually shared by men, but she does not carry it to the point where the body is preferred to the soul. It is rather a bodily reflection of the purity of her soul. "Sophie *was* a glutton." This possible vice was avoided by her mother's pointing out that bonbons would ruin her teeth and hence her attractiveness. Women share the penchant of little boys for sweets, but they do not naturally outgrow it. This characteristic would seem to be connected with female sensuality.

"Sophie has a mind that is agreeable without being brilliant, and solid without being profound." She will use her intellectual energies not to become a theoretical babbler, but to understand real life and the persons who populate it. This must not be parodied so that she is thought to be a cipher. One has only to read Julie's letters in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* to see the range of educated sensibility and psychological tact that Rousseau sees as the perfection of female intellect and which is far beyond anything one can expect from either a woman or a man today. "Sophie's sensitivity is too great for her to preserve a perfect stability of disposition. . . ." This is part of her attractiveness, and keeps a lover on his toes when it does not become a dominant trait and is counterpoised by a return to gentleness and good sense. Such sensibility appears to be a compensation for a woman's forbearance and sufferance in relation to the injustices of men and society. Men are permitted anger and rebellion, but women represent a gentler persuasion and contribute to reform not by their action but by their example. This is a not inconsiderable power, although it is likely to be despised by the revolutionary temper.

"Sophie is religious, but her religion is reasonable and simple, with little dogma and less in the way of devout practices. . . ." This is self-explanatory, but it is the result of the careful cultivation of her natural aptitude for religion, which, uneducated, would tend to swerve between fanaticism and atheism—either to protect her virtue or to justify its abandonment. "Sophie loves virtue." This is her passion because she has the feelings and the vision to recognize all

the power and satisfaction that it can win for her. She desperately wants bodily satisfaction and loving and being loved, but she knows that this will depend on the man "who is going to make solitude sweet for her." "Sophie is knowledgeable about the duties and rights of her sex." She is a sensitive and sure observer of men's qualities. Woman, as judge of man, exercises the greatest influence on his behavior. The belief that a woman's praise or blame is the solidest ground of male self-esteem is one of the most important springs of human connectedness.

"Sophie has little experience of the practices of society," but she has a great sense of the propriety connected with the fundamental relationships. She is respectful of her elders and severe with her contemporaries until she is married. She knows the importance of the ancestral and merely conventional in any society, but she knows that it is from her contemporaries that she will have to choose a husband while keeping all the rest at bay. There is a potential opposition between the generations, the parental authority trying to control the natural desires of the younger generation. Julie comes to grief over this opposition, but Sophie's enlightened parents introduce a reform that allows a uniting of these two poles. Such is the woman not completely appealing to modern tastes, who is made to be the complement of Emile, and whose vindication depends utterly on the success of the relationship she is able to form. Her father can, without being pedantic, address a speech to her about the new significance of marriage he has learned from Jean-Jacques.

This speech introduces the absolutely essential reform that makes marriage the fundamental and sacred contract and, more important, restores to woman her natural freedom on the level of society: she has the right freely to choose whether she shall marry and whom she shall marry (399–401). At least in the West this now appears to be simply a thing to be taken for granted. Parents still worry about their children's choice of spouses, but this worry is frustrated and unable to determine choices. As we all know, marriages arranged by parents remain the common practice in many places in the world. As a matter of fact, the most obvious sign of "westernization" of these "cultures" is the rebellion against parental control and the demand for this right of women to choose. This reform really was an innovation. As is the case in modern political philosophy altogether, Rousseau founds the duties of men and women in an original and fundamental freedom or right. Right precedes duty. But the choice, once made, is determining for the whole of life, and the contract constituted by the agreement between the two spouses is permanent. No divorce! This might sound

to contemporary ears like a historical limit on Rousseau's imagination or simply an incapacity to carry the logic of freedom to its conclusion. However, it is just this binding choice that constitutes the morality of marriage and morality itself. The proof of one's freedom consists in a choice by which one will stick and about which one can say, "The result is not as I would have wished, but it is my evident duty to accept the consequences of my choice." If one were to change when things are not going well, it would be desire, the desire of the brutes, that determines action and not freedom or will. If freedom is the essence of man, as the moderns believe, only the capacity to set down laws for oneself that one obeys can demonstrate the possibility and existence of such freedom. The marriage vow contains two elements: freedom and binding, self-imposed commitment. This is the whole reason for Rousseau's total concentration on sexual education in this big book. The sublimation of coarse natural impulse toward the lovable beautiful prepares the ground for the desire of a permanent and unique attachment. Turning that desire into a fixed will to maintain such an attachment is what enables man to convert desire into moral freedom. Rousseau thought this to be the condition of self-respect for modern man, who is no longer a believer or a patriot. When such will disappeared, nothing was left but the empty word "commitment." Just as the older forms of marriage prove the potency of authority, the newer forms really return man to his brutish, externally determined condition. Rousseau, unlike any previous or later thinker, focuses on marriage as the one place where this moralized freedom has its place. The social contract is always tentative and limited to the self-interested advantage of the individuals contracting. Only marriage in its very premise promises eternity and the engagement of all the best of oneself for a whole lifetime. This is the one institution that is founded in human freedom and is accessible to every human being. Beyond it there is nothing; it is the moral microcosm. All the gravity of a responsible life is present in this choice.

Of course one hopes that one's marriage will bring happiness, but in the world of morality, as opposed to that of nature, happiness must give way to morality. Hope, as Kant pointed out, is permitted, but unqualified pursuit of happiness ends in a pragmatism that undermines the self-respect generated by free choice. Human choice ennobles, but imposes a sometimes tragic dualism between happiness and morality, unknown to natural man for whom happiness or satisfaction is the only polar star. Rousseau made marriage bear a very heavy burden. The whole seriousness of life is concentrated in the thrilling but awesome choice of a husband or wife. It is around

this choice that the action of the Romantic novel revolves. As a result of Rousseau's analysis, for more than a century the fascination of the plots had to do with fidelity and adultery. When the untamability of the sexual passion and the loss of belief in the dignity of sublimation overcame Rousseau's influence, love was no longer the theme of the novel, and it is difficult to discern what has replaced it.

According to Rousseau, choices of marriage partners are traditionally made up of three elements, the social station of the partners, their wealth, and their inclination or attraction to each other. In most societies, the two former have primacy over the last. Therefore, parents claim the right to determine who will inherit their titles and their wealth. The mere sensual desires of the partners are, at best, a secondary consideration. Rousseau plaintively asserts that the persons are forgotten. Rousseau, rigorously consistent with his project of founding everything on the free choice of individuals and, particularly, on their sentiments, reconstitutes the family in the direction of democracy, where the free election of the partners founds the social contract. But in this case, the women's vote is more important than the man's because the duties it imposes on her are more onerous. The tension between the parents' wishes or commands and the wish of the young people is the most palpable expression of the tension between nature and convention. Nature is most important, but there must always be conventions, and some compromise must be made with them in order to live in society. Therefore, Sophie must choose for herself but must also consult with her parents. The mixture of wisdom and consent is *the* political problem from Plato on up to our own day, and it is represented here in the formation of the family. For Rousseau, consent clearly has primacy, but the sensuality of the young people has been refined by education so that the distance between brute desire and the law is reduced. Sophie's parents will both help her to think about the wisdom of the conventions and help to control her sensitive nature in order that it not be tricked by a clever seducer. Parents still play a role but, in the democratic family, the father's ancestral tyranny is replaced by a free relationship of trust produced by a mixture of utility and gratitude that replaces the rigidity of the law and the expectation of inheritance. The dark thickets surrounding the tension between nature and convention became another central theme of Romantic literature, where ill-sorted lovers tragically struggled to fulfill their natural inclinations for each other against the hostility of the ancestral.

It must be remembered that an older tradition represented by Aristotle would have cast marriage in a very different light. The

procreation and education of citizens is, according to Aristotle, what marriage is about. In this austere interpretation, eros tends to disappear as a significant element. Even with perfect awareness of how prejudiced and stupid parents can be, Aristotle thinks that in practice they are better judges of a couple's suitability for this business of running a household. He attempts to correct the possible ignorance of the parents by the guidance of a wise legislator. But Rousseau's advocacy of the rights of love has been so successful that Western men and women can hardly imagine any serious argument for Aristotle's position. Aristotle affirms that man is a political animal and that the family is naturally subordinated to the community.[50] Rousseau affirms that man is naturally a solitary being and that, if he is to become political, it will only be by the mediation of the smaller community, the family, to which the only partially natural connection is sublimated sexual desire. So fundamental are the issues underlying this dispute about the rights of free consent in marriage.

Sophie is lucky because her parents made a conventional marriage, the bases of which were destroyed by fortune. Her mother's family possessed title and her father's money, and somehow events separated her from her title and him from his money. But underneath they found that their love, which alone in marriage is permanent and not dependent on the vagaries of fortune, was real and sufficient unto itself. Thus they in their way can join wholeheartedly in Rousseau's project of a new beginning, helping Sophie to marry appropriately without the conflicts and compromises usually required. It is interesting to note that even within the confines of the conventions according to which Sophie's mother and father were betrothed, the couple was ill-assorted. It would have been better and more according to nature, Rousseau asserts, if the man were titled and the woman brought money, because family titles are at least signs of old virtue and represent certain respectable duties and responsibilities and are therefore more appropriate to the ruler of the constitutional monarchy that is the family.

In his speech to Sophie her father states with admirable baldness the relations between desire and will, the emergence of which is the theme of this last book of *Emile*.

> It is up to the spouses to match themselves. Mutual inclination ought to be their first bond. Their eyes and their hearts ought to be their first guides. Their first duty once they are united is to love each other; and since loving or not loving is not within our control, this duty necessarily involves another,

> which is to begin by loving each other before being united. This is the right of nature, which nothing can abrogate. Those who have hindered it by so many civil laws have paid more attention to the appearance of order than to the happiness of marriage and the morals of citizens. (400)

The impulsions of nature, which are not the product of law, must be the foundation on which law is built. One can legislate morality, if it is based on nature, and all the great projects for reforming the relations between men and women will work only if they found themselves in nature. The conversion of changeable desire into unchangeable duty is the work of the will assisted by reason.

Sophie is left to choose for herself. Although questions of wealth and station are not entirely indifferent for human beings living in society, Rousseau, speaking through Sophie's father, gives voice to the permanent human aspiration to be determined in important things not by conventions, by the here and now, but by the essential things such as real merit and beauty. This is to be the decision that will decide everything for Sophie, and she is given every opportunity to choose well, not consulting in her own choice anything but her taste. This freedom can be safely accorded by her parents because her taste has been so well educated. In a remarkable digression, Rousseau offers us "the worst case" of a girl with an ardent temperament whom he claims really existed, whom he also calls Sophie though that was not her real name, and who was granted such freedom by her parents. They were astonished to find that after she looked around, no one was to her taste, and she began to languish. When interrogated, she candidly admitted that she was in love with Télémaque, the hero of Fénelon's epic of the same name (404). Given this book by an eminent Christian author with roots in classical sources, she has fallen in love with its hero. No contemporary man can match the literary depiction of Ulysses' virtuous and handsome son. This supposedly real Sophie was by nature and by education made to love, but that love is not self-sufficient; it requires a worthy object. Without such a love she actually perishes from unfulfilled longing.

This is, in one commonsense perspective, foolish. This Sophie is a victim of an overheated imagination. But she dies for an ideal rather than live with solutions that compromise the most important things. Rousseau tells and perhaps makes up this little story in order to teach us something about women and about imagination. Imagination, as Rousseau has always pointed out, constitutes the quasi-totality of the sexual life of human beings. "There is nothing beautiful except that

which is not" (447).[51] But to dismiss this Sophie's death as a result of folly, saying that her love is only imaginary, does not suffice, for almost the whole being of civilized man exists in the imagination, so that the distinction is not properly between real and imaginary but between the sublime imaginary and the degrading imaginary. The so-called realistic use of sex is nothing but degraded or, to speak anachronistically, neurotic imagination. This Sophie's imagination makes the beloved her own, a product of the ideal world created by herself rather than an arbitrary impingement from the outside. This is the mechanism by which Emile will discover his Sophie. The supposedly real Sophie Rousseau speaks of here is in love with a fiction and is living proof of the power of literature. All of the foregoing can apply to men as well as to women, but Rousseau indicates that women are more susceptible to this sublime perversion. This is because they bear such a heavy burden, turning their own and their husbands' desires toward the family as well as to the satisfactions of love. The female seems to be inclined to a sort of semireligious fanaticism and to be able to be caught up in the imaginations to be found in books more easily than does the male. One can see here part of the reason for Rousseau's own strategy in often addressing himself especially to females and using the novel as his vehicle.

It is easy for us to think of another book with another hero with whom Christian women can fall in love and renounce the coarse pleasures of this world. And Rousseau here attempts to explain this phenomenon. The story is meant to cut both ways. It illustrates a kind of folly that forgets the material substrate of the divine satisfaction. The bodily need that is the source and the end of the beautiful fantasy must be part of a healthy human life. Nothing could be further from the notion of original sin. This girl, whom Rousseau calls the real Sophie, is foolish, but she is a noble fool with an exalted soul, a character no realism can rival. The Sophie of our story, the one who marries Emile and possesses an ordinary soul like his, also judges him by the standard of Télémaque, although, characteristically, she has also read, in addition to Fénelon's book, one about keeping the family's accounts. But either because Emile is better than the suitors the supposedly real Sophie encountered, or because Emile's Sophie has a less lively imagination and a healthier sensuality, she judges him to meet the standard. She links the needs of body and imagination as the supposedly real Sophie could not.

After having completed this portrait of the Sophie who awaits Emile, Rousseau makes a few sensible remarks directed toward men about the choice of a wife (406–410). Although a wife should be

chosen on natural grounds, any real choice will take place in a conventional social framework. Rousseau advises that equality of station and fortune is desirable so that neither spouse can, as it were, pull rank and cloud the natural suitability. And if there is an inequality, it should be the male who has the advantage. This is because he represents the will of the family as a unit. The woman is to influence the man's decisions. She is not to return to her natural individuality. But the real distinction is not between social classes but between those who think and those who do not. This distinction may be a result of education and reflect economic advantage, but in the actual choice of a husband or a wife one is confronted by those who are able to think and those who are not able to do so, no matter how each got that way. This does not mean that the simple are not as moral as or even more moral than the sophisticated. But the great moral choices do not make up the substance of everyday life as conversation does. In order for there to be the day-to-day community between human beings they must be able to talk to each other usefully and pleasantly. This does not mean that they will think or say the same things. All to the contrary, Rousseau has indicated that man and woman will bring different offerings to the feast, but they must be able to understand each other and take an interest in so doing. The community of understanding and of speech is the most enduring of the bonds between a man and a woman. Thus Rousseau cannot be understood as wanting to enslave women by ignorance. Above all Sophie is educated to be educable by her better-educated husband. Though Rousseau is at the source of our indifference to conventional criteria in the choice of a wife, he adds an important criterion, education, which we now tend to neglect at least in theory if not practice, because in the wake of egalitarianism and relativism, education is not thought to be a real difference.

He concludes with a remark about beauty as a determinant of choice. He says that one's wife should not be too beautiful (a theme in a charming Gérard Depardieu film). Beauty is perhaps the primary attraction for civilized man, and it is not to be counted for nothing, but Rousseau puts it in its place. Once a beauty is possessed, it becomes routine and not a very special advantage. But it can be a source of distorting vanities for both parties. (Remember Gyges' story in Herodotus.[52]) And it draws in its wake almost inevitable jealousies of all those who are as attracted as the husband was before her beauty became routine. Ugliness is, of course, too repulsive and never becomes routine. Therefore, by this strange route, Rousseau reaffirms the ancient principle of moderation.

XV

Now begins the courtship (410–441). It is part love dance like that of those birds who show off their plumage to their intendeds, part a series of love tests like those to which knights-errant were subjected by their beloveds. Courtship is out of fashion today. Actually, it was superseded a couple of generations ago by dating, which has now been superseded by I know not what. The whole purpose of courtship is obviously to acquaint a couple with each other before they make such a momentous and life-determining decision as marriage. Now the overwhelming majority of the educated live together for an extended period before marrying, and neither of the partners is likely to be anything resembling a virgin even when they enter into this premarital stage. Their behavior is sensibly explained by the consideration that they ought to know each other well before they make up their minds to have children. But, Rousseau would respond, the sexual act should be the culmination of and the reward for marital commitment. The separation of the sex from the commitment takes the pressure off and surely separates the sexual act from the "relationship." This degrades the status of the act itself as surely as do teachings about original sin, and as effectively as did the real Sophie, who chose death rather than compromise.

Rousseau says that the time of courtship is the happiest time because the anticipation is better than any fulfillment and that the expectation nurtured during this period extends itself throughout the life of the marriage. It is not so much reality but the creation of an illusion necessary to love that is cultivated during this period. It is true that the lovers will not know just how good they will be together in bed, but Rousseau's view is that a properly primed couple will do just fine on that score. He insists that the first sexual experience is determining for the whole of life, that the furtive and frequently degrading first attempt at lovemaking lowers the sights and takes away much of the idealism that connects the erotic ecstasy to the earthly reward of merit and beauty. Courtship helps to constitute the first attachment and gives free play to the tantalizingly ambiguous relations between individuals as well as to their diverse male and female sexual instincts. The life of two individuals devoted to each other can never be simply without ambiguities that continually require attention, respect, and acts of understanding. There can be no taking for granted. By this measure, our current behavior, although it appears to be sensible, could also be explained as timidity and the fear of running erotic risk. The imagination, as experienced in sexual fantasy, no longer informs the views of lovers, and thus

their day-to-day cohabitation becomes routine. The ease of divorce and the fact that today there is no social price to be paid for promiscuity further weaken the erotic tension that is the mainspring of romantic marriage. If love and so much else of what is social are, as most people believe today, really sexual sublimation, then one must really sublimate. If healthy, nonneurotic sex is for social man so delicate and vulnerable a plant, it must be cultivated with the greatest care. The merely bodily has to be inextricably entwined with the higher human aspirations, and this is what Rousseau thinks is very badly done in our times, in which the Christian debasement of eroticism is replaced by the bourgeois debasement of eroticism.

Emile and his faithful Jean-Jacques, like a knight-errant with his squire (or as Sophie, whose head is full of her book, sees it, like Télémaque with his Mentor), arrive in the house of her parents (413). It is worth noting that Emile knows of Télémaque only by way of the *Odyssey*, a purely classical source in which the Christian knights and their romances do not have a place. Sophie recognizes Emile by way of his likeness to Télémaque, while Emile recognizes Sophie by way of his own ideal at which he arrived with the help of Jean-Jacques. This particular woman, at least, requires literary help in love not needed by Emile, who has his tutor-poet. His book is *Robinson Crusoe*, the much harsher story of the solitary, self-sufficient man. When toward the end of *Emile* the couple must separate for a time, Sophie gives Emile her fundamental book, *Télémaque*. In return, Emile gives her his *Spectator*, a much more social book, while remaining silent about Crusoe.

The meeting between the two lovers, so amply prepared for each other, appears completely accidental in a way that makes chance seem to be a goddess (Fortuna) in the eyes of those laboring under love's illusions. Who could think otherwise, when those fated to love each other meet in such distant and isolated places, where they would never have looked intentionally? But all of this has been presumably arranged by the fine hand of Jean-Jacques in cahoots with the parents. In later Romantic novels such meetings do actually take place by chance, but the less trusting philosopher puts on the vestments of Fortuna. He illustrates the philosopher's secondary pleasure, as dream merchant and spectator. These facts are cautionary and make one less hopeful about the perfect success of relations between human beings.

First there must be a mutual recognition and what Stendhal calls, elaborating on Rousseau, crystallization, which is a mixture of desire and doubt where *amour-propre* begins to play a role and engages each

in the opinion and judgment of the other while taking away all interest in any others. Sophie sees her Télémaque arriving and is moved by his tenderness toward her parents when they detail the story of their sufferings. Emile hardly notices the girl who could not possibly be the one he has been seeking so assiduously and futilely. But mention of the name Sophie, the very name suggested by Jean-Jacques as appropriate to the ideal woman, galvanizes the young philo-sopher. They look at each other and Sophie blushes and turns away. In a sense everything has already been accomplished with that blush, which appears so much against the will of the modest girl and is so avidly sought by the eyes of the young man.

> If I enter here into the perhaps too naive and too simple history of their innocent love, people will regard these details as a frivolous game, but they will be wrong. They do not sufficiently consider the influence which a man's first liaison with a woman ought to have on the course of both their lives. They do not see that a first impression as lively as that of love, or the inclination which takes its place, has distant effects whose links are not perceived in the progress of the years but do not cease to act until death. We are given treatises on education consisting of useless, pedantic, bloated verbiage about the chimerical duties of children, and we are not told a word about the most important and most difficult part of the whole of education—the crisis that serves as a passage from childhood to man's estate. If I have been able to make these essays useful in some respect, it is especially by having expanded at great length on this essential part, omitted by all others, and by not letting myself be rebuffed in this enterprise by false delicacies or frightened by difficulties of language. If I have said what must be done, I have said what I ought to have said. It makes very little difference to me if I have written a romance. A fair romance it is indeed, the romance of human nature. If it is to be found only in this writing, is that my fault? This ought to be the history of my species. You who deprave it, it is you who make a romance of my book. (415–416)

Emile might seem to be nothing but a Romantic novel but it *ought* to be man's history. Rousseau wrote man's factual history in *The Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality* with its somber message about the dividedness of man that is its result. Here he tells us that his project is the overcoming of the dividedness, and we un-

derstand Kant's enthusiasm for the "illustrious Jean-Jacques Rousseau" who taught us about the possibility of reconciling natural sexual desire with civilized marriage. This overcoming of the opposition between nature and society is the true meaning of culture.[53]

At the outset of *Emile* Rousseau tells us, "Forced to combat nature or the social institutions, one must choose between making a man or a citizen, for one cannot make both at the same time" (39). This opposition and need to choose is the problem revealed in *The Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality*. Yet the project of *Emile* is stated two pages later in what appears to be a contradiction of this judgment:

> But what will a man raised uniquely for himself become for others? If perchance the double object we set for ourselves could be joined in a single one by removing the contradictions of man, a great obstacle to his happiness would be removed. In order to judge of this, he would have to be seen wholly formed: his inclinations would have to have been observed, his progress seen, his development followed. In a word, the natural man would have to be known. I believe that one will have made a few steps in these researches when one has read this writing. (41)

To repeat, Rousseau's invention of sex education is the bridge over the otherwise uncrossable chasm between natural and social man, between caring for oneself and caring for others.

The courtship is divided into a series of stages in which the ever-eager Emile passes between the ecstasy of apparent acceptance by Sophie and the agony of apparent rejection by this girl, who in acting capriciously makes Emile reveal himself as he is by nature and education, and completes that education. One has to remember that Emile has never before cared about anybody's opinion of him. He feels sorry for those who suffer but is in no way involved with them; he wants nothing from them. He feels gratitude toward his tutor for what he has done for him, but he didn't ask for it and felt no need of him. The teacher, as it were, has disguised himself as a part of nature. Remember that the problem is to educate a human being who can care as much for another as he cares for himself, or to use Kant's formula, can treat others as ends in themselves. Every man understands his own self to be the end, which is equivalent to Hobbes's war of all against all; but starting from this war, one can incorporate the selves of others into one's own self, thus making

peace. Parenthetically, it should be mentioned that almost all modern thinkers have started with Hobbes's state of nature, but our perennial problems in understanding human association make it doubtful whether many have succeeded in emerging from it. It is almost forgotten that there once was another route that avoided the land of Hobbes and did not need to sink into the morass of isolatedness. If there is any merit to this book that I am writing, it will be to reopen the quarrel between these two standpoints with respect to what Rousseau and Plato agree to be crucial, love or eros.

At their first meeting Emile and Sophie suspect that each is what the other has been looking for. They do not even speak to each other on the first day. Emile knows what he wants and arranges for his readmission to the household by a ruse, borrowing some clothes that he will have to return. And as soon as he leaves with his tutor he wants to look for lodgings as near as possible. But he is immediately taught a lesson about the difference between how one must behave with males and with females. To pursue a young woman is already to compromise her. If on further acquaintance the young man were to decide that the young woman is not right for him, she would be damaged goods. It might be thought that a more intimate relationship was established, an opinion that would feed the rumormongers. Woman depends on the good opinion of others more than does man. People will talk, and she can become an object of their pity or scandalous rumors. The rejected party is always the object of a certain pity, and the status of beloved does not sit well with an object of pity. Therefore keeping up appearances and even deception are part of the delicacy required of a serious lover. This is lesson number one, which applies, obviously, only where there is a presumption of modesty and chastity on the part of the woman. Emile recognizes that he must think about her, not only about himself, and therefore about the opinion of others. He learns the lesson easily because he is already deeply involved and sees that a directness and openness that would suit him do not conform to what suits her (413–418).

After repeated visits Emile comes to believe not only that he has been accepted as a suitor but that he can directly ask for her hand. She tells him to ask her father, and he is told by him that it is up to Sophie. He is mystified and believes he is rejected. This is his first disappointment and doubt, and it makes Sophie all the more precious in his eyes. The hindrance heightens his awareness of his need and the pain it will cause him if it is not to be satisfied. His loyal friend, who has set himself up as the go-between, informs him that Sophie is worried about his money. Emile is rich, we learn for the

first time. It turns out that the natural man in society needs a great deal of conventional currency in order to maintain his position. This whole education and the life he is going to lead with it require money. The aristocratic parents who have ceded their rights to their son's tutor have the duty of providing the tutor with the sums that will make that education possible. Sophie is worried because a moneyed man might think that his contribution to a marriage consists in that and she would have no means to rival him. She has learned all about the various effects of money on character. So Emile immediately wants to throw all his money away, with the archetypical indifference to money of all Romantic heroes. But this would be worse, not only or especially because later he will need it, but because his sacrifice could become an even more powerful proof of his superiority to his wife, who need make no such sacrifice. What to do? Simply, the courtship must go on, and he must prove to Sophie that class and wealth do not obscure his humanity (419–424). This is the purpose of the rest of the courtship. He has won the right to be a suitor but is now in the position of having asked for marriage. In other words, he has become dependent on Sophie while she is not dependent on him.

This is the happiest time of life, when all their youthful joy and expectation produce scenes worthy of the novelist's pen. The very doubt about the outcome that permeates all their pleasant activities together spices the joy, and, again, the absence of the consummation so avidly wished for makes the imagination all the livelier. We see Emile instructing Sophie in singing and dancing, thus depriving the prurient teachers of these things of their vocation. He openly wants the woman he teaches, whereas the apparently neutral professor of these arts must be a deceiver. He conveys all he knows to her without pedantry, and he is no longer interested in any of his store of learning that she cannot share freely with him. The teaching activity is fully erotic, and his favorite pedagogic position is on his knees. What this does to scientific objectivity is worth considering. Together they walk through nature, which belongs to them and to which they lend their feelings. They have none of the cramped existence of modern individuals, and they do not need the expansion of self practiced by kings and nobles with their vain display of themselves in purchased domains.

At such moments they are inclined to turn their vision upward toward the Author of nature, and this is the only explicit reference to Emile's own practice of religion. It is part and parcel of his love affair and is in fact its culmination. The Savoyard Vicar's worship is pos-

sible only on the basis of his overcoming of sexual desire, whereas Emile's worship is the consequence of it. The two young lovers, obviously in an excruciating state of sensual excitement, know that they must still sacrifice their fulfillment for a while, and they therefore use God as the reward of their new and freely chosen virtue. This is one of the varieties of religious experience, the one most appropriate to lovers, the one that moralizes nature (426).

Sophie is the master and her commands are law. But law and desire do not coincide, so Emile is constantly trying to evade the law. He kisses her clothing or her hand, a favor she grants but which he turns into a right. Then she tries to prove that it is only her grace by refusing what he thinks is a right. They quarrel, but they also reconcile. Their value to each other and their pleasure are thus enhanced. The game of love is the most enticing game of all.

One of the important steps of the "internalization" of morality in Emile becomes clear at this point. On some days she orders him not to see her. She is testing her authority and his will. On such days he hangs around the neighborhood practicing the art of benefaction among less fortunate folk. It would be easy for him to see her from a distance on the sly. "But Emile's conduct is never devious; he does not know how to be evasive and does not want to be. He has that amiable delicacy which flatters and feeds *amour-propre* with the good witness of oneself. He rigorously sticks to his banishment and never approaches near enough to get from chance what he wants to owe only to Sophie" (436). There is a conflict between his desire and his self-respect, but this first conflict is made pleasurable—by the exercise of his newly discovered will in the name of love. This pleasurable self-restraint will make him independent of Sophie, who is only the fulfillment of what his ideal dictates to him. His is a personal aesthetic, a disinterested love of the beautiful and a sublimation of coarse lust. It is the denial of the Gyges' ring story as told by Glaucon in Plato's *Republic*, which supposedly teaches that there is no interest in morality when one is not seen by gods or men. Even when Emile's goddess Sophie does not see him, she can rely on her lover. Rousseau solves by love of women the problem Plato solved by love of wisdom, philo-Sophie in the place of philosophy.

During this part of the courtship Rousseau stops to reflect on jealousy (429–431), for when one is in love this dark passion is almost inevitably lurking in the wings. Rousseau wishes to avoid the ugly possessiveness and crimes that follow in its wake. Insisting on an exclusive right to the love of another is a tyrannical attempt to control what can never be controlled, natural inclination. Most often it is a

form of *amour-propre*, directed not toward the beloved but toward those who aspire to the favor of the beloved. Jealousy is a sign not of true love of the beloved but of competition for primacy among males. All of this is commonplace in the modern criticism of the passion of jealousy. But jealousy contains a nobility and a caring that are usually absent in the critiques of it, which are used to excuse less loving as well as less concern for chastity. The self-sufficiency of the wise man or of the merely selfish one is inimical to love. Rousseau preserves in Emile a jealousy of self-doubt, with no concern for the aspiration of other suitors but only for his own worth. He fears that the highest tribunal of his worth, Sophie, will issue a negative verdict on him. Rousseau laments the loss of his pupil's precious independence in the same way he laments the loss of the innocence of the state of nature in more political writings. But here, as there, and even in a higher degree, he offers a compensation that surpasses the original state. The mutual and reciprocal love of the partners in marriage may not be as dependable as the selfishness of an individual, but it offers greater satisfactions, and freely chosen morality is a more wonderful thing than the mere impulsion of nature. In *The Social Contract* Rousseau says that man was born free but is everywhere in chains.[54] Here the chains are self-consciously and willingly forged, and they are covered with beautiful flowers.

The courtship is completed in two decisive episodes that show what Emile really is. First, Emile, filling out the time when he is not permitted to worship at the feet of his goddess and adorn her, works as a carpenter, the trade he learned in Book III. There he became self-sufficient in society where there is a division of labor. This trade is always necessary and does not depend on the opinions of others. It is presented here with a somewhat different twist, as a way of overcoming the prejudice of gentle folk who despise the necessary things and the practitioners of the crafts that procure them. Sophie and her mother come to watch Emile at work in the master's shop. The rich young nobleman acts as though he were the equal of the other workers and gets a pittance for his labor. What is more, he is not an amateur but appears to be one of the most competent workers. Sophie's mother, playing a role that has obviously been assigned to her by Jean-Jacques, seems to think that Emile is not very serious about this, that it is an aristocrat's condescending pose. In order to test him she invites him to come home with them, the thing he most desires to do. Here there is a clear conflict between desire and duty. But Emile regrets and is apologetic. Without hesitation he pleads his promise to the master who needs his work. Sophie even balks at the

suggestion that the master be compensated for the loss that his departure would entail. You don't buy yourself out of commitments. This is the way money bursts the social bonds of equality. Thus Emile shows that he can bow as easily before his freely given commitments as he has always bowed to natural necessity. This is the way that the realm of freedom is established and becomes akin to that of law-governed nature. Sophie's mother seems to take offense at Emile's capriciousness, his lack of *politesse*, which gives Sophie the occasion to defend Emile and to affirm publicly that this lack is a part of Emile that makes him more lovable. Certainly a girl looking for a faithful husband would be reassured by such behavior (437–438).

Sophie demands among many other things that her suitor be punctual, neither early nor late. In the second decisive episode, she expects him one day and he does not show up, nor does he send word. It is not until early the next morning that she gets word that Emile and Jean-Jacques are all right and will be coming along soon. Her anxiety for their safety turns into a cold rage at the insult she has suffered at their hands. The crisis, after running its course of reproaches and explanations, is resolved when Jean-Jacques explains that they found a man with a broken leg in the forest, gave him first aid, and took him to his home, where his pregnant wife, shocked by her husband's accident, immediately went into labor and required their assistance. This is the way they spent the night and what made them unable to come or to give word. Emile concludes this account by adding: "Sophie, you are the arbiter of my fate. You know it well. You can make me die of pain. But do not hope to make me forget the rights of humanity. They are more sacred to me than yours. I will never give them up for you." To which Sophie responds, "Emile, take this hand. It is yours. Be my husband and master when you wish. I will try to merit this honor" (441).

Emile has won his fair maiden. Dedication to human rights has taken the place of the slaying of dragons or wicked knights as the deed that makes him irresistible to his beloved. To prefer the rights of humanity to her is to care more for what she herself cares for and is worth more than any preference for her, stemming from a taste that must necessarily be passing. If he had shirked his responsibility to the injured man and had run to Sophie, this would have been for his own satisfaction. He prefers Sophie to anyone but in a refined way that proves that he respects her rather than uses her. In this episode he displays his peak sentiments, his active compassion, which has become in him the dignity of man, expressed as the specifically human possibility of respecting all men and treating them as ends in them-

selves. His becoming Sophie's slave has been the way to his freedom as a social man. He is the slave of a woman who loves him because he is a man of principle, obeying his inner lights. He began as a being of mere sentiment or feeling. In his attachment to Sophie he became conscious of himself in the opinions of another. He now becomes self-conscious in obedience to the law he has given himself, which Sophie loves and hence validates. This kind of soul construction is an embryonic expression of Hegel's teaching about the development of man, from sentiment to consciousness to self-consciousness. Rousseau accomplishes this construction with a motor powered by sexual desire. The unity of the couple is made possible by the eroticization of man's capacity for universal, rational moral judgment, a capacity made practically effective by sublimated erotic energy.

XVI

Jean-Jacques plays an apparently perverse joke on Emile. He enters Emile's room with a letter in his hand and says, "What would you do if you were informed that Sophie is dead" (442)? Emile angrily responds that he would never again see the man who informed him of it. Like the angry, irrational Cleopatra, he blames the messenger. This is, of course, human, all too human, attributing blame and the intention to harm to whatever is connected with depriving us of what we want. We see that Emile's resignation, his capacity to accept reality as it is, has been undermined by his love. His happiness now depends on fortune, which he must both worship and propitiate. If he did not love he would not behave in this way. This reminds us of the letter Brutus receives from Rome telling of his wife's death, to which he responds, like a true Stoic, that he is unmoved by it because he knew of its possibility. This stoic endurance is impressive to those who are witnesses, but Shakespeare has already let us see that Brutus is an imperfect Stoic and is really very moved. His imperfection and his attempts to hide it touch us because they seem to be human and make Brutus more like us.[55] But we find ourselves before the choice of being rational and apparently not caring, or caring and being irrational. In the latter case our happiness would depend only on fortune. As Rousseau later points out to Emile, even if Sophie were alive but had been unfaithful, his need for her would then make him indifferent to virtue and willing simply to abandon himself to whatever might ensure the possession of his fickle beloved. In spite of everything he

is alienated from himself, and his happiness depends on her opinions and caprices.

The engraving that Rousseau commissioned for Book V represents Circe turning Ulysses' incontinent companions into pigs (356, 439). She accorded her favors to Ulysses, who was not tempted by her charms and remained a man. This illustrates the moral condition that Rousseau wants to encourage in Emile. The man who is constant and true to himself in good and bad fortune is the only one who fulfills the requirements of humanity. Emile, who unlike most men is not frightened of death, has only one vulnerable spot, his passion for Sophie. Jean-Jacques compares himself to Thetis, who dips Achilles in the Styx but fails to make him totally invulnerable because the heel she is holding remains out of the water, although it is clearly not Emile's heel that Jean-Jacques has failed to protect. The problem is summed up in Emile's inability to accept Sophie's death. Nature may have taught him to accept his own death with resignation, as do the brutes, thus avoiding Hobbes's insistence that men live in order to avoid death. But the lover who lives for the beloved cannot accept the beloved's death with resignation.

This is the moment of moral virtue when natural inclination no longer suffices for leading a good life (the natural man had no such attachments). Rousseau wants to combine the steadfastness of the natural man with the attachments of the civilized man, or the reasonable man with the passionate man. His analysis of the natural man living in society results in the recognition that such a man must be divided between desire and duty. This is, of course, admitted by everyone, but it has a special pathos for Rousseau, who has traced the source of man's misery to that dividedness and has promised an overcoming of it. He softens our disappointment by propounding a new way of understanding duty, one that comes from within, is noble, and satisfies the new longing to think well of oneself, rather than one that comes from outside, reflecting the merely accidental relation between nature and society. He invents a morality that is something more than a mere calculation of long-range interest and constructs in his pupil a will that is something more than a desire.

Emile must leave Sophie in order to experience what can happen if she were to leave or be taken from him. Jean-Jacques calls in his chit. The sole promise or contract that Emile has made, the long forgotten agreement that he will obey Jean-Jacques if Jean-Jacques is willing to help him through the dangers involved in his search for a wife, must now be honored (326). There have been moments during

his courtship when Emile was divided and sensed the tension between his desire for immediate satisfaction and his ideal of what Sophie and he are. But that ideal did not involve an absolute obligation, and it remained on the level of sentiment or taste. Essentially, Emile from the day of his birth up until this moment has done exactly what he wanted to, whereas morality, at least as understood by Rousseau, requires doing precisely what one does not want to do. First Jean-Jacques shocks Emile with the suggestion that Sophie is dead, and then orders him to leave her for a long time. This entire scene is a dramatic recapitulation of the deepest sources of our tradition. It is an explicit imitation of the *Iliad*, where Agamemnon takes away Achilles' girl (Rousseau has just compared Emile to Achilles) and precipitates the great wrath that is the theme of the *Iliad* and does so much harm to everyone. Plato, in the *Republic*, counter to the popular taste, defends the ruler Agamemnon and accuses Achilles of selfish self-righteousness.[56] Anger is one of the most important themes of *Emile* and here Rousseau sides completely with Plato's unorthodox treatment of anger, the tragic passion *par excellence*. Anger is a self-indulgence bespeaking an incapacity to accept what happens to our hostages to fortune—friends, beloveds, and family—a wanting to make permanent what is changing, a passionate attempt to give protection to what is our own. In the accents of indignation it insists on justice where there is no justice. It is a much greater threat than the mere selfishness of the desires because it clothes itself in the appearance of morality (87). Emile begins with an Achillean response, angry at the report of Sophie's death and angrier at the suggestion that he must leave her. Jean-Jacques is the enemy who wants to make him do something that he does not want to do. Emile pleads the immorality of leaving her but the objective observer finds his plea suspect because Emile's claim of morality is identical with his most powerful desire, to possess Sophie here and now.

Emile's relation to Jean-Jacques also parallels that of Adam to God in the Bible, the other fundamental source of our moral understanding. In both the *Iliad* and the Bible, the justice or the reasonableness of the ruler's commands, and hence the obligation of the subject to obey, is the problem or the question. The modern liberal tradition attempted to solve this problem by beginning with the desires or the wishes of the subjects, but in order to do this had to establish a lax or mercenary morality. Rousseau tried to establish a high or noble morality but one that is easily understood and rationally accepted by those who obey it. Emile overcomes his anger

when Jean-Jacques reminds him of his obligation, of the promise of obedience he has made. He might have questioned the validity of his contract and the goodwill of his master. Instead he becomes docile and obeys.

We must analyze the psychology that makes this result possible in a being who is naturally motivated only by pleasure and pain. Rousseau, in his explanation to Emile, begins with the strangest imperative imaginable, "You must be happy" (442). This "thou shalt" is quite different from the Ten Commandments' "thou shalt nots." This commandment is identical with the desire of every human being and would seem to be self-enforcing. It is akin to Hobbes's imperative, "Thou shalt preserve thyself," but Rousseau, as opposed to the liberal teachers who spoke not of happiness but of the pursuit of whatever one conceives of as happiness, teaches that happiness has a known content. In this case it is clear that Emile must both love an ephemeral mortal and at the same time recognize that she can be lost. Only if he can combine mortality with the longing for immortality can he be happy. And this requires something more than nature provides us with. At this point Rousseau introduces his fateful distinction between the good man and the virtuous man. The good man is, essentially, the natural savage who lives according to his impulses. As long as he does not need other people, he will have no intention of harming them. His existence is sweet and effortless. Its social version was depicted by Rousseau at the end of Book IV, where he described how he himself would live if he had money. The virtuous man is involved with others and must, if he is not to be a hypocrite, make binding commitments with them, the fulfillment of which is more than a mere matter of taste. So for Emile, who is to be a husband and a father, there is no choice between goodness and morality (444). He must be moral. Rousseau presents an entirely new understanding of morality to Emile. Virtue, he tells him, is not the perfection of desire, but rather the overcoming of desire. Virtue *is* strength, the strength, to put it paradoxically, to want to do what one does not want to do. Where do we get the strength to look at the persons and things we love most and at the same time to be aware of and unmoved by their vulnerability? The incapacity to face the mortality of those we love is partially explained by the weakness of modern man, attributed by Rousseau to the conflict between nature and society. Because of this conflict men do not know what they want and waste their energy in all directions. Rousseau has already told us that Emile, the vigor and unity of whose desires have been carefully preserved, could crush his contemporaries like insects. He has the primitive strength of soul that pursues its

goals without conflict. How does he turn this strength against the desires from which it stems?

Emile's moral doubling of himself is made possible by his romantic ideal, which provides him with a counterpoise to his desires. If, after the fashion of the natural man, Emile had merely slaked his sexual lusts by a casual encounter with Sophie, he would have no conflict and no need of virtue. But his sublimation of that desire, which we have witnessed in reading Rousseau's book, requires an image of what he is and what she is, as well as the ground on which they can meet and become one. This idea, fueled by the natural desires and refined by sublimation, permits Emile to command himself rather than to receive his commands from outside. His ideal, the product of imagination and *amour-propre*, gives him an attachment to morality that allows him to get a distance on and conquer his immediate interests. The formation of the ideal, which has been the work of Emile's postpuberty existence, is the origin of will in a soul for which will is not natural. Desire refined is able to project a polar star and at the same time to give man the strength to follow it. To use Nietzschean language, the strong soul becomes both the taut bow which can reach the ideal, and the arrow which has lofted that ideal. This is the highest reach of freedom and the culmination of sublimation.

The ideal of reciprocal love, in which the beautiful soul emerges out of the attraction to beautiful bodies, acts as a self-generated substitute for the laws of nature for civilized and potentially free man, for whose guidance nature provides no law. Out of *amour-propre*, mediated by the desire for the love of a worthy partner, emerges the desire for self-respect. This *constructed* soul and the attachment to another reveal themselves to be extremely fragile, sublime but more dependent on the tutor's manipulations than on nature. The most surprising aspect of Rousseau's teaching is that although the lover recognizes the necessarily ephemeral and vulnerable character of what he loves, he does not turn his love toward the permanent or eternal things, as does the religious man or the philosopher. It is a mystery how a man or a woman can give him- or herself totally to a mortal beloved and at the same time be fully conscious that there is no eternity here and that the beloved is certain to be lost. This attachment to a single human being flatters our desires because very few of us can love God or the Ideas as we love another human being. But it demands of us an ungrounded attachment to the ideal, which is somehow understood as both identical to the one beloved and at the same time transcending him or her. Rousseau tells Emile that "You have enjoyed more from hope than you will ever enjoy in

reality. Imagination adorns what one desires but abandons it when it is in one's possession. Except for the single Being existing by itself, there is nothing beautiful except that which is not'' (447). Imagination, the medium of romantic poetry, provides the lover's substitute for the real, eternal, and transcendent world of the earlier thinkers. Rousseau asks Emile to live without illusion while under the spell of illusory charms. Such is human love between two persons who believe they want to cleave to each other exclusively.

For Rousseau love is the love between man and woman and must be reciprocal. It must be between man and woman because its source, however distant, is in the crude natural teleology of the body, and Romantic literature has no suitable place for anything other than the attachment of man and woman. There are no Davids and Jonathans properly in it. It must be reciprocal if these two, this couple, are to be faithful to each other. In Rousseau, as I have already mentioned, there is no hint of another aspect of love, prized by the ancients, in which one loves the lovable without expectation that the lovable will or can reciprocate. Love was understood by them to be an uneasy composite of two elements, the longing for the beautiful and the longing to possess one's beloved for oneself. The latter can be the basis of a marriage; the former cannot be. Rousseau has tried to stretch sexual frenzy up the ladder from its bodily source to the moral heights, but he has to admit finally to Emile that over the long run, frenzy cannot endure and principle must fill in for the waning passion. Habit and easy commerce with a woman for whom Emile once had an uncontrollable passion, the love of children, and obedience to the law he has given himself will have to take the place of the raging fire that Jean-Jacques has stoked in Emile and that originally accomplished everything without supplement.

The character of this romantic stoicism Rousseau proposes can be seen in a little, incomplete story, *Emile and Sophie*,[57] which he left among his unpublished papers. It would, of course, be wrong to take this text as authoritative, for who knows what Rousseau intended with it. It may very well be just a game or fantasy he played with one afternoon. However, in it Emile remains true to the education he has been given, especially in this last important scene of *Emile* where he discovers the will and learns that what begins as his master's will becomes his own will. Emile in this story discovers that Sophie has been unfaithful. This is a devastating blow, but he remains faithful to the ideal of what Sophie should be and gains his strength from that. In his head the ideal is separable from the person who incarnated it. He could have forgiven her and had her back, but he rejects this

alternative. But he does so not because he is angry with her and revenging himself, as one would expect, but out of delicacy for Sophie. She would always think that he was remembering what she had done to him and that he remained with her out of condescension rather than admiration. He might indeed relearn to respect her, but she could never respect herself as he respects himself. Emile lives faithful to the idea of Sophie, and does not make himself dependent on the fickle real Sophie. Fortune even makes him a galley slave, but he is not broken and, like Epictetus, considers himself free and happy in his slavery because his satisfaction depends only on himself. As I just said, this is all very mysterious, and one can understand why Kant, who begins from Rousseau's analysis, ends up by saying that happiness is not the goal of the moral man. Rousseau makes morality, at least for Emile, emerge out of love, and he makes us hope that the happiness depending on the senses and the possession of the beloved will coincide with morality.

XVII

So Emile must leave Sophie, but with the assurance that he will return and claim her. This separation is not only for the sake of teaching Emile a salutary freedom that can be exercised in his bondage to Sophie, just as the Emile in *Emile and Sophie* remains faithful to Sophie when they are no longer together. The time of separation is also to be used for travel, in order to learn about politics (450–471). Politics is central because connected with it is the law, which deserves respect and can punish those who disobey it. The independent man is cosmopolitan and can leave the places where laws impede his happiness or make unjust demands upon him. But a married man must find a permanent abode. His attachment to family makes him dependent on politics but also wary of it. And in this passage on travel Rousseau reveals what might be called a conservative side. He presents a résumé of *The Social Contract*, that fiery book which provoked and guided revolutions, and apparently delegitimized all regimes except the one described in it. But Rousseau uses it here to teach Emile not to expect perfect justice in any real nation where he is likely to live, not to cast himself against the rocks of injustice inherent in every regime, and to contain his idealism if he doesn't want to be destroyed. Emile learns that even unjust laws contain elements of justice or aspirations to justice and that he can respect them for this. His passion and idealism will be turned